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Rear-Admiral The Earl Mountbatten of Burma

# LAST VICEROY

*The Life and Times of*

*Rear-Admiral The Earl*

MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA

P.C., K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O.,  
K.C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C.

*by*

RAY MURPHY

*With 25 Illustrations*



JARROLD'S *Publishers* (LONDON) LTD

FOUNDED IN 1770

LONDON NEW YORK MELBOURNE SYDNEY CAPE TOWN



*First published      September 1948*

*Reprinted . . . . October 1948*

*Reprinted . . . . May 1949*

*Printed in Great Britain  
by The Anchor Press, Ltd.,  
Tiptree, Essex*

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## PREFATORY NOTE

WHEN Major Ralph Forster of the British Joint Army Staff stationed in Washington, D.C., first suggested to me in 1945 that I write a biographical study of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten I light-heartedly agreed that it would be a good idea. I had seen Lord Mountbatten in Manila in July 1945 when he was conferring with General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, and had been strongly impressed by his personality as well as by the dimensions of his responsibilities of command.

For this very reason I should have realized that I had frivolously undertaken the almost superhuman task of evaluating a complex and colourful world figure in terms of the gigantic, kaleidoscopic and complex problems of all Asia. The few months I was able to spend in direct observation and research, in both Singapore and England, can scarcely be said to have provided me, despite the very great courtesies offered by Admiral the Viscount Mountbatten of Burma himself (with certain reservations which will be noted later in my narrative), by Brigadier J. S. M. Wardell, Captain Ronald Brockman, R.N., Wing Commander Alan Campbell-Johnson and Mrs. Richard Crichton (to mention only a few) with the deep knowledge of men and the experience of events that preparation of such a biography requires.

I persevered none the less because my belief kept growing that a study of Lord Mountbatten's career and achievements provides some sort of key to an understanding of many of the world's problems, that they adumbrate a political method of dealing among men of hostile interests which is but faintly understood or applied in the post-war world. In any event he will certainly survive any attempt of mine to evaluate him or his work.

I should like to express my deep appreciation for advice and assistance in gathering this material to the following: Admiral of the Fleet the Lord Chatfield, P.C., G.C.B., O.M., K.C.M.G.; Admiral of the Fleet Sir James Fownes Somerville, G.C.B., G.B.E., D.S.O.; Lieut. the Hon. General Walter Bedell Smith, G.B.E., K.C.B., D.S.M.; Lieut.-General Raymond Wheeler; Lieut.-General Sir William Joseph Slim, G.B.E., K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.; Lieut.-General A. C. Wedemeyer; Lieut.-General Sir Henry Royds Pownall, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.D.; Lieut.-General F. A. M. Browning, C.B., D.S.O.; Major-General R. E. Laycock, C.B., D.S.O., R.E.; Major-General G. E. Wildman-Lushington, R.M.; Major-General Bryan Kimmins, C.M.G., C.B.E.; Rear-Admiral Charles E. Lambe, C.B., M.V.O., R.N.; Brigadier-General

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Timberman; Captain Thomas Hussey, R.N.; Captain F. R. J. Mack; Captain Roger Selby, R.N.; Group-Captain Dodds; Colonel Scott-Bailie; Colonel Langley; Lieut.-Colonel Frank Owen; Lieut.-Colonel W. A. Thomas; Lieut.-Colonel Derrick Knight; Commander Edward Dunsterville; Commander Butler Bowden; Commander Alastair Robin; Captain W. C. A. Robson; Major R. Gillespie; Lieut.-Commander Donald MacBarnett; Hon. Major-General Sir Harold Augustus Wernher, K.C.V.O.; Sir Arthur Jarrett; the Officers of H.M.S. *Cavalier*; Charles Eade, Esq.; W. Kirkwood, Esq.; Geoffrey Pyke, Esq.; J. V. Murphy, Esq.; Frank Maggs, Esq.; William Lawlor, Esq.; Miss Nancy Lees; Professor J. D. Bernal; Dr. Thomas Gaskell; Guy Pollock, Esq.

The book, if it meets with any success, will owe it largely to their friendly co-operation.

## CHAPTER I

### DINNER WITH THE SUPREME COMMANDER

OF all the leaders developed by Great Britain during the long armistice between the two World Wars, only one could not possibly have been produced by any other nation or any other society. In fact, to a rather alarming extent it would appear that the British Commonwealth was living on its accumulated human capital, under the leadership of Elder Statesmen like Winston Churchill, Jan Christian Smuts and Mackenzie King. Yet it is not too difficult to conceive of an American Churchill. Indeed, he might turn out to be a reasonable facsimile of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, while the two great Dominion leaders are cast in a recognizable New World pattern. Generals and admirals—even such stars as Montgomery and MacArthur—are virtually interchangeable, dealing as they do with common problems of force and logistics.

But of Adml. Earl Mountbatten it might quite truthfully be said that in no other country would such a phenomenon be credible. In the United States, in particular, it is quite impossible to imagine a man of wealth and position emerging as a great military and imperial leader. We do not entrust the command of large armed forces or the administration of our foreign commitments to the Astors, Vanderbilts or Morgans. Only the well-developed "mucker pose" of a Roosevelt rendered him acceptable to public opinion, and then only at the cost of being termed "a traitor to his class". Our gilded young men are quite apt to become a Tommy Manville; their opportunity to become a Douglas MacArthur, or even a Paul McNutt, is non-existent.

For this reason it seemed to me, from the first time I saw Mountbatten in Manila in June 1945, important to understand the methods and principles of government by which the British Empire converted our waste of the so-called "idle rich" into a political by-product of such dynamic importance to the Empire and to the world. How is it that London can utilize for the public welfare the advantages of birth, wealth and education which American sprawling democracy distrusts and discards? What are we losing when they condemn the corresponding social group of potential American Mountbattens to Wall Street, night clubs, and divorce courts?

This account of my search for the explanation of Mountbatten, in terms of his life and a career recently crowned by appointment to the key-post in the British Empire—as Viceroy of India—cannot be other than tentative, and perhaps naïve. Yet it seemed and still seems ~~so~~ me

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that the attempt was well worth making in the interests of a broader and warmer understanding between the English-speaking peoples of the world at this moment of decision in their history. What I have set myself to discover is how it could happen that, in a generation which found Great Britain's traditional supply of rising statesmen decimated by the First World War and at a period in history when the emphasis was increasingly on the man-of-the-crowd, the great empire turned to a cousin of the King, a man of allegedly frivolous disposition with a colossal fortune, and made him in turn the leader of Combined Operations against Axis Europe, Supreme Allied Commander in South-East Asia, and finally Europe's as well as Britain's pro-consul in an Asia writhing in the revolutionary throes of undigested nationalism.

Since this account is quite as much a record of my personal voyage of discovery in the, for an American, unexplored worlds of British Empire Policy as it is a biographical study of the man who shares with Anthony Eden the distinction of being one of the two statesmen developed in England between the wars, I shall begin by relating to you how it all started.

It was at Singapore and I was sitting disconsolately on the verandah of the American transit officers' quarters overlooking the city when a British military dispatch-rider, on a motor-cycle, pulled up in front of the house and handed me a long blue envelope. It was an invitation to dine that evening with Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Commander South-East Asia. This, it seemed, was to be a polite *coup de grâce* for my first serious ambition.

I had arrived that same morning, flying by "Globester" from Washington, in order to write a biography of the Supreme Commander. I went immediately to see his Deputy Chief of Staff for Information, Brigadier Michael Wardell, and was told Mountbatten had radioed to Washington over a month earlier flatly refusing me his indispensable permission. This cable had never been received, so here I was, after a journey of 12,000 miles, gloomily expecting that evening at dinner to be pointedly requested to leave Singapore at my earliest convenience.

This was not the only reason I nervously paced the verandah, impatiently watching the slowly setting sun, while waiting to proceed to Government House. I was eager in one way, but afraid in another, finally to meet Lord Louis. For two months in Washington I had been digging into his past, while struggling with visas and publishers' contracts, and in the first dust I had raised Mountbatten appeared hazily as a mythical spirit, a strange mixture of strength and weakness, derided by some and adulated by others. I feared now I might be disappointed if, as was not improbable, I found him to be a nice, rather commonplace man whose ~~kind~~ reflection I had happened to see in the distorting mirrors of publicity.

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I had first had the impulse to write a biographical study of this dynamic, if contradictory, personage after seeing him at a Press conference he held while visiting MacArthur in Manila a month before VJ-Day. He had told his audience of correspondents how he had brought the campaign against the Japanese in Burma to a brilliant conclusion with the capture of Rangoon. He had impressed me then as being a complete paradox. Here was a man raised in total security of position, money, and rank, who could yet address an audience of hard-bitten newspapermen with all the fluency, poise, and theatricality of a professional actor and politician combined. Instead of the aloof and easy consciousness of power I had expected in a man of his stamp, I found a somewhat brittle brilliance and what seemed to me a wistful craving for the reassurance of popularity and applause. In his manner he was totally different from MacArthur or Nimitz, yet in his sparkling way of talking there was something more impressive than the cold and distant reserve of Nimitz or the torrid and impersonal pulpit eloquence of MacArthur. A specific difference between the two American commanders and Mountbatten was that they pretended that they did not care whether they impressed one favourably or not, while he actually and ardently did care. As we left the large room in which the Manila conference took place a cynical correspondent leaned over to me and said, "Methinks there is much less here than meets the eye."

That remark started the train of thought leading to biography. Was Mountbatten's appointment to the post of Supreme Commander, as a comparatively junior naval officer, a political job? Was it because he was a cousin of the King or had the presence of authority? It was certainly not because he had the wisdom of age or the sagacity of experience. Indeed, he seemed to me the type of man who would try anything new rather than contemplate tiresomely recurrent problems with the patient detachment born of extensive knowledge and endless frustration.

Subsequently, on my return to Washington, questioning people who knew him or who had served under him, and reading stories about him in newspaper files, did not do much to satisfy my curiosity. Several American Army officers who had served in his theatre seemed to be strongly antagonistic to him. The general impression they conveyed was that his headquarters (which they nicknamed the "Supreme Example of Allied Confusion", from the initials of South-East Asia Command) was a barren bureaucratic waste, rustling with the shuffling and reshuffling of papers by a lot of "brass hats" bent on obstruction. But this is the common feeling of fighting soldiers about a headquarters and its incomprehensible ability to obfuscate the obvious and make crooked the straight. They had many nicknames for Mountbatten, among them "Superbo", an unkind corruption of the abbreviation "Supremo", for Supreme Commander. To them Mountbatten was a remote and irrespon-



sible master who sat in his luxurious headquarters at Kandy, in Ceylon, as remote as a Zeus on Olympus, who might come down once in a while to make sport with the lives of men fighting in a jungle, while he remained cool, charming and god-like in his taste for other people's confusions. They also called him the Kandy Dandy, the Kandy Kid, Lord Non-combatant. General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell paid him a characteristic compliment when asked if he did not find Mountbatten thoroughly likable. He rasped in reply: "Yes. That's what makes him so dangerous. Even I like him."

In talking to British naval officers stationed in Washington, some of whom were Mountbatten's contemporaries and a few his seniors, I heard more remarks of a not entirely laudatory nature. The consensus of their opinion was that he was reckless and always trying to be "too clever". At the beginning of the war, when he was in command of the 5th Destroyer Flotilla, the opinion of him held in the Navy seems to be summed up by, "There is nobody better to be with in a tight spot than Dickie Mountbatten and nobody likely to get you into one sooner." "All theory and no practice" was another verdict. "He refuses to come down off the chandelier." "He reminds me," said one man, "of the type described by Kafka in one of his diaries as 'An expert, a specialist, one who knows his rôle, a knowledge, to be sure, that cannot be communicated, but which fortunately everyone can do without'."

When I timidly inquired why Churchill had appointed him Chief of Combined Operations, with the acting rank of Vice-Admiral and the honorary ranks of Lieutenant-General and Air Vice-Marshal, if he had been so ineffective as the commander of a Destroyer Flotilla, I was told he and Churchill were both Tories, that Mountbatten besides had royal blood in his veins, and that Churchill owed a great debt to Mountbatten's father for giving the order, on his own initiative, to keep the fleet in a state of mobilization just before the outbreak of World War I when he was First Sea Lord and Churchill First Lord of the Admiralty. I was also told that, while Mountbatten was Chief of Combined Operations, he and Churchill had made the Chiefs of Staff cut down many a hollow tree on the off-chance of finding honey. One naval officer summed up his opinion with the words, "It can never be said of Dickie Mountbatten that he learns from experience, because he never does the same thing twice." I wondered at the time how many of these somewhat bitter opinions were fathered by normal Service jealousy and how many were justified.

The American Press, as I learned from the files of several newspapers, was always reiterating the same *clichés* about him, a discovery which bore out Max Beerbohm's famous assertion, "History does not repeat itself; historians repeat each other." Starting from the cynical

suspicion that all that glitters is counterfeit currency, newspapers and periodicals alike consistently portrayed Mountbatten as a royal polo-playing glamour boy who had married a rich wife. This was because, when Mountbatten first became news, royal glamour boys instead of junior naval officers were making the American headlines. His spectacular adventures in the destroyer *Kelly* in the beginning of the war received a good deal of notice from the Press, but always with a note of condescending astonishment and the implication that a somewhat light-hearted friend of the Prince of Wales had made good. Later, when he was appointed as Chief of Combined Operations, it was recalled that he was both a royal glamour boy and the hero of the *Kelly*, before he was given the super-glamorous job as the commander of a lot of picturesque toughs who made midnight raids on the coasts of Europe. He was the fictitious Raffles, the gentleman burglar, not the real Raffles, the British Empire builder. Later still, when he was Supreme Allied Commander, the same files were thumbed through by the same re-write men and more or less the same character slant was given to every story that came out about him: "Mountbatten, one-time polo-playing friend of the Prince of Wales, hero of the *Kelly*, the Commandos, and a million cocktail parties, becomes Supreme Allied Commander." The *Chicago Tribune* came crashing through on this subject with the usual Bertie McCormick breadth of vision, conceding that "It would be unfair to call him a royal playboy, yet there can be no doubt he's where he is because he is the King's cousin and that he's commanding Americans because to let him do so serves Roosevelt's social ambitions".

Whether Mountbatten was playboy or paladin, whether he was a naval officer who was a socialite or a socialite who was a naval officer, whether he was a brilliant Supreme Allied Commander or had merely been given a soft seat, was what I wanted to find out. Even if Mountbatten persisted in his refusal to let me publish his life, dinner that evening would at least give me a chance to guess at some of the answers to these questions.

At 6.30 Brigadier "Mike" Wardell picked me up in his jeep and we drove to Government House, which is surrounded by a large park in the centre of Singapore. Cameronian sentries saluted us smartly at the gate. We drove along about half a mile of winding driveway, flanked by rolling lawns and ancient trees, to the building, with its long façade of gigantic pillars, which holds the majesty of Empire within its walls. It was built in the 'eighties, I should guess, in that florid style reserved by all British architects for public structures which are intended to represent, in a palpable way, I have no doubt, the ponderous, involved, and inflexible proportions of bureaucracy.

Stalwart guards snapped to attention as Wardell and I climbed the

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steps and entered a large gloomy hall with a massive staircase in the centre. He led me from there into a small room where Mountbatten's three aides were having cocktails, and we chatted casually with them for a few moments until we were summoned to approach the presence. We progressed along another long corridor, passing bleak and solemn apartments filled with potted palms and wicker furniture, from whose dark walls enormous painted effigies of royalty and functionaries long since dead frowned down upon us. We then climbed two flights of stairs, passed a Goanese servant standing in the corridor with two Siamese cats playing around his feet, and finally arrived in Mountbatten's private apartment, followed by the cats, now complaining loudly. I understood their attitude.

Two sides of the drawing-room we now entered opened on a marble-flagged terrace, walled with shutters which, now thrown back, disclosed the tiled roofs of Singapore stepping down to the harbour full of ships faintly outlined in the distance. I scarcely had time to observe the view or to look at the many silver-framed, affectionately dedicated photographs of royal personages about the room, when a tanned, rather heavy man entered, clad in corduroy trousers and a checked sports shirt. He was as bald as a bust of Julius Caesar. Wardell introduced the new arrival to me as Peter Murphy. After we had exchanged cautious politenesses about the name we bore in common, Murphy abruptly showed me a copy of *Cannery Row*, by Steinbeck, and said: "I am giving this to the old boy to read on his flight tonight to Delhi. Is it any good?"

I said I hadn't read it but I had heard that it was not one of Steinbeck's best.

"Oh well," said Murphy, "it doesn't make much difference what one reads on a plane. I just wanted to give him something so he won't start working. When you work during a night flight I find you are apt to be exhausted when you arrive."

At that there was a brisk click of heels on the marble paving and a moment later an erect figure, wearing a dark green bush-jacket and carrying a cigarette-box under his arm, strode quickly into the room. It was Mountbatten.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, gentlemen," he said.

As Wardell introduced me he gave me an appraising look tempered by a frank smile.

"Please won't you sit down?"

Mountbatten took his place in a deep armchair and I sat down on his left on a sofa of like proportions. Silent Goanese brought in iced rum cocktails, served in champagne-glasses. He then turned to me and came straight to the point. "I have to tell you two things, one of which you will not like and the other, I believe, you will. I shall tell you the

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thing you will not like first. As Mike here has already told you, I did not authorize you to come here, so I was aghast when I received a letter from General Bedell Smith a few days ago saying you were on your way. I cannot authorize you to write an official biography of me, because it has been my established policy not to advertise myself or my career." No earthquake or lightning-bolt occurred to punctuate this. "With this in mind I have refused permission to C. S. Forester, a boyhood friend of mine, and a number of others. Moreover, I have already given my theatre recorder, Wing Commander Allen Campbell Johnson, who has served with me both here and in Combined Operations, permission to do a semi-official Harry Butcher type of diary on the years he has been with me. Now, I couldn't all of a sudden reverse my policy and let you do an official biography, could I?"

I agreed that it might not be the right thing to do.

"But although I can't offer you any official assistance," continued Mountbatten, "because of the misapprehension under which you came out here I am prepared to give you all the unofficial assistance I can. Mike Wardell, here, who is in charge of Public Relations, will put you in touch with anybody you want to talk with who has served on my staff out here. I will authorize them to see you and talk to you. In that way you will probably get a truer picture of me and my Command than I could give you myself."

I leaned back and took a large gulp of my cocktail. What a relief! While he was speaking his first words, visions of a rapid return flight to the United States in a bucket-seated A.T.C. 'plane, of nights in transit camps, of angry creditors, furious publishers, and hostile agents meeting me at the airport, had paraded before my mind's eye. Now they vanished as quickly as a dollar bill over a bar.

"That arrangement would suit me perfectly," I replied. "Actually I should not like to do an official biography because it is almost autobiography without the advantage of personal frankness."

"True," Mountbatten said. "Official stories are usually rather apt to be propaganda, and I don't think you are interested in being, in effect, a Press agent."

"I only hope that your friends and members of your staff won't mind being bothered too much," I remarked.

Mountbatten laughed. "They'll tell you I do everything around here myself," he said, "so they must have plenty of time."

"Plenty of time to work at night, you mean. I was up until three this morning," remarked Peter Murphy, looking up at the ceiling with a weary smile.

At this moment Wardell picked up a black folder and opened it. Inside was a typescript I had given him that morning. "I have ~~here~~,"

Wardell said to Mountbatten, "a short biographical study Murphy prepared before he left the United States, culling his facts from old newspapers, gossip and the like. Would you like to read it?"

I blanched.

"God's teeth! No! I don't want to see it under any circumstances," said Mountbatten, much to my relief. "If I ever started reading it I would not be able to stop until I had finished writing the book myself." He interrupted himself to say, "By the way, when did you last see Bedell Smith?"

"I saw him the day before I left Washington," I informed him. "He told me to tell you that he had seen your cousin, the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, before he left Germany, and that he seemed not to be suffering too much under the occupation."

"He might be now. But did Bedell Smith tell you how on one occasion he rescued my cousin from jail?"

"No, sir. What happened?"

"Well, my cousin was given a box of K rations by a G.I. in gratitude for giving him shelter. The rations were found on him by the military authorities and, as it is a punishable offence for a German to possess Army rations, he was put in jail and it was Bedell Smith who arranged to have him released."

"That seems to be pretty harsh treatment!" I remarked.

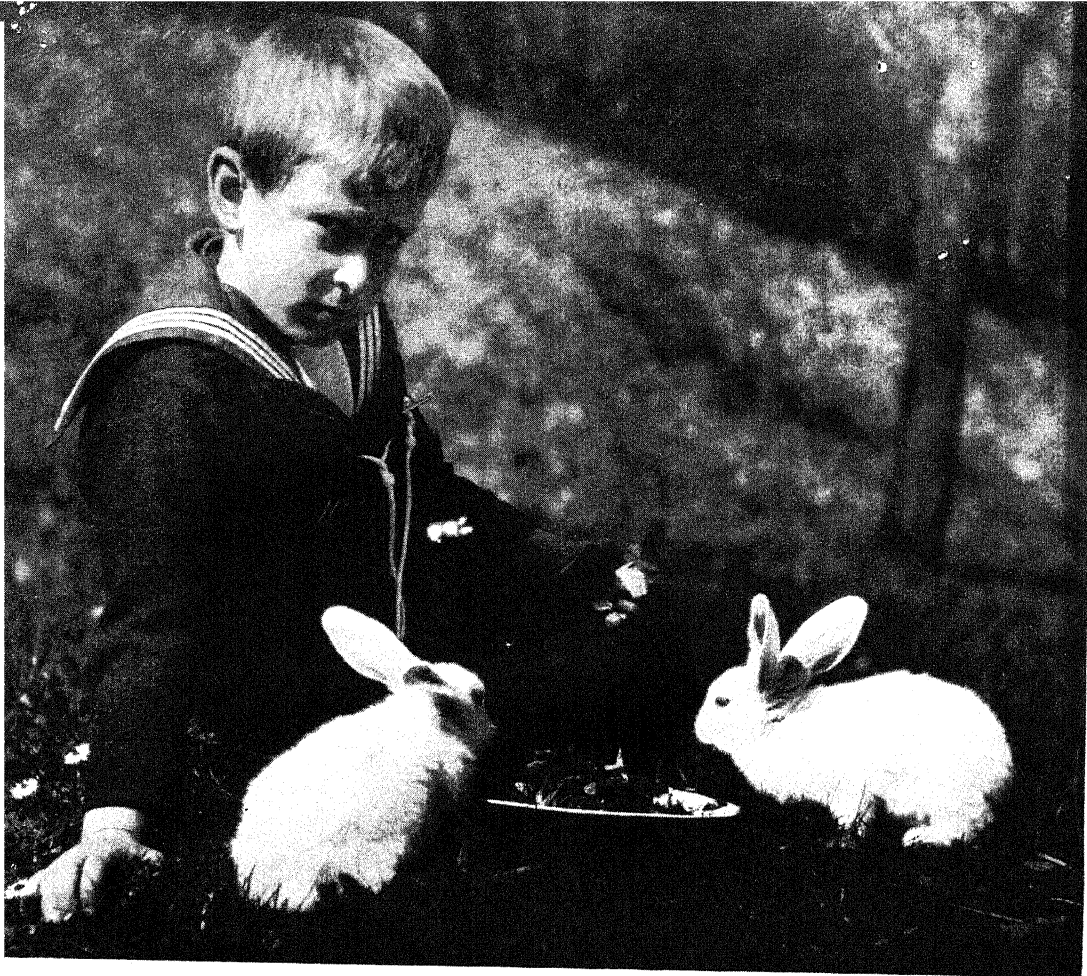
"On the contrary," replied Mountbatten. "Often that was a rule in war-time, and it was up to my cousin either to have eaten the rations immediately or hidden them where they would not be found. I gave up all ideas of the chivalry of war one day off the shores of Crete after my ship, the *Kelly*, was sunk. There we were, the few survivors floating around in the water. I was almost prepared to admit, at the moment, that the enemy had done a good day's fighting. But their 'planes did not stop circling, strafing us in the water. I learned then that you don't fight on your own terms, or on any preconceived old-fashioned ideas of chivalry, but you fight on the enemy's terms."

"Is that why you were so determined to get Field Marshal Count Terauchi's sword after the surrender?" I asked.

"Precisely," replied Mountbatten.

"My reason for insisting on Field Marshal Count Terauchi's surrendering me his sword was this," he continued. "The Japanese revere their swords. The one the Field Marshal surrendered to me had been in his family since the thirteenth century and ranked amongst the national treasures of Japan. If he surrendered that sword he would understand that he had been beaten far more clearly than if he merely had to put his signature to a document. Not only did I insist that he should surrender his sword to me, but I insisted that each Japanese commander should





*[Courtesy of Mrs. Richard Crichton]*

At Heiligenberg, 1905



surrender his sword to his opposite number all down the line. In Europe such a feudal procedure would be fantastic. The Germans understood far better the type of strictness over regulations which caused my cousin's short stay in jail."

At this point Mountbatten looked at his watch and said, "We had better go in for dinner, as my 'plane is supposed to leave in an hour."

As we walked in, Mountbatten asked me, "How do you like my flat?"

I replied that I thought it was most pleasant, certainly more livable than the rest of Government House I had seen.

"It certainly is," was the reply. "As you might guess, it was the only part of the building occupied by the Japanese, who entirely remodelled it. They made it quite comfortable and far less pretentious than any other part of the building."

The dining-room which we now entered was as simple as the sitting-room. On each side of it was a sideboard and in the centre was a heavy mahogany table. We sat down. A Goanese waiter asked me whether I would have a whiskey-and-soda or lemon squash. I chose the former, while Mountbatten and the rest of the company chose the latter.

The two Siamese cats who had followed us into the dining-room began making as much noise as a pair of hungry infants. "Time they ate," said Mountbatten, and a servant handed him two dishes of meat, which he put down on either side of his chair. The cats almost leapt at the food and symbolic silence descended on discord in South-East Asia.

"Oh, by the way," said Mountbatten over the soup, "talking about my German origins, this is something that might interest you. I have just been sent my own Gestapo dossier which a friend recovered from Himmler's files, from which you will see that I appear to be some kind of traitor in the eyes of the Nazis."

"Traitor?" I said. "I don't know what you mean."

"Well, I'll show you," said Mountbatten. "My naval steward will be able to find it. Oates! Oates! Oates!" he called.

One of the Goanese sailors who was waiting on table disappeared to look for Oates, and came back shortly to report that he was nowhere to be found.

"Well, surely he's here somewhere. Find him and tell him to come up."

Turning again to me, he went on to say: "You'll find this fascinating. It's a report specially drawn up and submitted to Himmler personally. It's the Nazis in a nutshell. The document, produced early in 1943, starts by saying that I am going to play a decisive part in connection with the Second Front in Europe and it will largely depend on my proposals as to which operation will be carried through and how they're going to be tackled."

"Well, that's very flattering, anyway," I said.



"Far too flattering," said Mountbatten. "But listen. It goes on to say that every contribution which helps in forming judgment on my personality is of value. Just wait till you see what conclusion they come to. Ah, Oates, there you are! Oates, you know that green file with some German writing on it? I think it is next to my bed. It's somewhere in the bedroom. Bring it to me, will you, please?"

"I know you're in a hurry, sir," I demurred. "I hate causing all this trouble."

"No trouble at all. If I don't get it for you now I shall forget to do so later on."

I was told subsequently that this way of calling for a document and halting proceedings to have some point made clear is characteristic of Mountbatten in all his dealings. Among other things, it provides a breathing-space during which he can arrange his ideas and arguments.

"Here we are. Look at this," said Mountbatten, and proceeded to show me a shabby and faded green file with "*Rus*" in Gothic script on it. To my astonishment it seemed chiefly to consist of an enormous folding genealogical table which traced Mountbatten's ancestry through Queen Victoria back to the time of the Great Fire in London.

"They can trace me back as far as Charlemagne," said Mountbatten, "but all they manage to prove is that the royal families of Europe are very much intermarried. Look at this bit, in which it says that I show considerable 'loss of ancestry' (*Aheneverlust*). And look at Himmler's own comment on the report. 'The work of this peculiar Mr. Mountbatten (*über diesen eigenartigen Herrn Mountbatten*) has interested me very much. Practically such a man, if he were caught, should be called to final account for treason. However, the Battenbergs have always been somewhat peculiar.'"

Mountbatten laughed at this and said: "Himmler doesn't seem to be quite sure whether I should be hanged, because of my predominantly German descent, or confined to a lunatic asylum because sometimes my ancestors married their cousins. It really shows the blood madness of the Hitler regime when they only manifest a slight interest in what I accomplished during the war and are fascinated by the marriage of one of my ancestors to another in the seventeenth century."

"I seem to remember that your German ancestry caused you to be the subject of some sort of strange rumour in an American paper," I said.

"Which rumour was that?"

"I remember it appeared about a year ago. The idea was that the *Wehrmacht* was on the verge of selling out to the Western Powers to preserve Germany from the Bolshevist menace. It had been proposed that you should be made the new Fuehrer of a reorganized Germany."

"Oh yes, I remember hearing something about that too," Mountbatten

#### DINNER WITH THE SUPREME COMMANDER

laughed. "I wondered at the time what costs they would give Eisenhower, Spaatz, Wedemeyer, Eichelberger and all the other Allied war leaders of German descent."

As Mountbatten continued talking I took the opportunity to study his appearance. He looked tall and commanding, even sitting down, and was remarkably handsome, yet not with that painful insipidity the descriptive "handsome" usually implies. His mouth, jaw and forehead were broad, and his nose was long and sharp. His expression, which continually changed, was always pleasant. I began to realize what a young woman of my acquaintance meant when she said that the first time she realized she had grown up was when she had seen Mountbatten at Norfolk.

There was, however, something in his way of talking I was at a loss to explain. He spoke with rapidity, facility, and emphasis, yet what he said did not impress me as being spontaneous. His conversational effects somehow suggested a virtuoso who, for his ability to produce certain musical effects, has been applauded so much that he continues to produce the same effects over and over again. As a result I felt as though everything he said or did had been rehearsed beforehand to hear how it sounded. I may have been doing him an injustice, but the impression was strong. Moreover, something in his manner gave me the feeling there was a core of nervousness under his smooth veneer of self-assurance.

After the meal was over, port and cigars were passed round. "I don't generally smoke, but I enjoy a cigar after dinner," said Mountbatten, as he carefully rolled the end of one in the flame of an aluminium lamp. When it was well lighted he began to puff slowly. The aluminium lamp, I noticed, had an inscription on it. "That lamp," said Mountbatten, noticing my interest, "is one of my favourite possessions. It was made for me and presented by the men of the aircraft-carrier *Illustrious* when I had to leave her to take up my appointment at Combined Ops."

We had scarcely had time to start our port or cigars when an A.D.C. came in to announce that Mountbatten's car was ready to take him to the airport. He jumped to his feet and hurried out to sign some papers before he left and I had an opportunity to talk to Murphy for the first time that evening. I was telling him about labour conditions in the United States when my host reappeared and said, "Come along to the airport with me." We hurriedly rose from the table and followed him, almost at a run, down the stairs and through the corridors of Government House. Waiting outside was an immense open Cadillac. Mountbatten jumped in first and signalled to me and Wardell to get in beside him. I had a hazy impression of the roar of motor-cycles and the flash of headlights as we shot through the grounds and the canyon-like streets of Singapore with the cool night air blowing in our faces.

Mountbatten was talking. "My wife is coming to Singapore shortly. You must meet her, a very remarkable woman—has twice as much energy as I have. D'you know that she flew into Java and Sumatra before my troops went ashore so that she could inspect the conditions at the prisoner-of-war camps? She came back and bothered generals, badgered air marshals, and worried admirals into giving her the necessary facilities to get these people evacuated. I don't know how many lives she saved by her prompt action. I know I never could have fixed it myself."

"I remember reading about her on one occasion," I replied, "when as Superintendent of St. John Ambulance Corps she made a very clever and caustic reply to some Members of Parliament who accused the St. John nurses in India of slacking."

At that moment we shot through the gates of the Kalang airport and were shortly driving across the field to a point where many flood-lights made a hole in the darkness. Through it we could see a gigantic white York bomber with a dozen officers standing by it. When the car came to a stop and Mountbatten got out he went at once to hold hurried conversations with them while his luggage and dispatch-boxes were being stowed; then he said good-bye, climbed quickly aboard, and the door shut behind him. We backed away as the motors began to roar and the 'plane started to taxi lumberingly towards the end of the runway. Finally she turned, her propellers spinning faster, and again moved along the runway, gathering speed. Then she took to the air and droned into the night towards Delhi. I guessed that Mountbatten was still talking.

During the drive back to Singapore I wondered what adventures I might have by the way in my coming quest after the character of Mountbatten. I could not anticipate, in that drive through the darkness, that before I returned to the United States I should spend a month cramped within the narrow loins of a destroyer; that I should take tea with a retired petty officer in the remote suburb of Tooting; that a 'plane I was in would almost plunge into a volcano in New Zealand; that I should eat fiery curry, washed down by arrack, at a Havildar's party; that I should see corpses, bearing the stigmata of crucifixion, floating down a canal in Batavia; that I should lunch and dine with generals and admirals on three continents before the quest was over. For I was yet to understand that Mountbatten's story is an integral part of the Empire which fed him and which he defended to the best of his rather remarkable abilities. And I was yet to realize that to understand Mountbatten is to understand the modern British Empire in all its roots and all its broad dominions and its inflexible grip on the power of the seas. The man who said that the Thames was not a river but was "liquid history" anticipated the book which I had innocently set myself to write.

## CHAPTER II

### THE YOUNG PRINCE

As Supreme Allied Commander in South-East Asia it was necessary for Mountbatten to deal with representatives of many different nationalities. In one day he might have a meeting with high-ranking Dutch officials, lunch with a French admiral, hold an afternoon reception for Chinese Communist organizers of the Malay underground movement and dine with American newspapermen.

It was generally conceded that one of Mountbatten's outstanding characteristics is his intuitive understanding of and sympathy for the various expressions of opinion and points of view of different nationalities and strata of society with which he has had to deal. To a great extent this characteristic is due to his upbringing. His father, as a naval officer, was frequently stationed away from England in such naval bases as Gibraltar or Malta. Naturally enough, when stationed abroad unaccompanied by his family, as it was customary for naval officers to be, Prince Louis would spend his periods of leave visiting various relatives. The identity of these relatives was evidence of the fact, stated in Himmler's dossier, that the royal families of Europe were interrelated. The sisters of Prince Louis's wife were married to members of the Russian royal family, one to the Emperor and the other to the Grand Duke Serge. His daughter was the wife of Prince Andrew of Greece, his niece was Queen of Spain, and his brother-in-law was the Grand Duke of Hesse. This meant that when he and his family went to visit their relatives they might go to any royal residence in Europe, from the Peterhof near St. Petersburg to the King's palace overlooking Athens.

Thus, from his earliest childhood, young Mountbatten was brought up internationally, and as he was a child he mixed not only with the children of royalty but also with those of the gamekeepers and gardeners attached to the royal households. During one month he might be fascinated by the spirited obliquity of an Eastern merchant and the next interestedly observing the simple-hearted drunkenness of bearded peasants at a Russian fair. He might overhear two diplomats and two governesses discussing the same problems almost simultaneously. This sort of education naturally fostered an open mind and a broad outlook.

As a consequence of frequent visits paid by the family to Russia, and the intimacy between the Battenbergs and the Russian royal family, the child was nicknamed "Dickie" as a compromise with his Christian name, Nickie. This compromise was arrived at by his older sisters to avoid the

confusion that might occur from having two Nickies to talk about during visits to Nicholas, Czar of Russia. The nickname stuck and he is still called "Dickie" by his intimate friends today.

"Dickie" was christened Louis Francis Albert Victor Nicholas of Battenberg. Born in Frogmore House, on June 25, 1900, he was the fourth child of Prince Louis of Battenberg and his wife, Princess Victoria, grand-daughter of the reigning Queen of England. His birth was announced to the Queen at Windsor, where she was in residence, and the aging ruler, who had outlived everything but her popularity, drove through the royal gardens to Frogmore House to inspect her great-grandson. This house, then the residence of Prince Louis, in which his young son spent the better part of his first three years, is situated in the grounds of Windsor Castle, overlooking a garden which contains an artificial lake, the tempietto tomb of Queen Victoria's mother, and a spurious Gothic ruin, ivy-covered. It was remodelled from a squire's hall as a dower house for Queen Caroline. A month after the first visit the venerable Queen went to see her great-grandson again, accompanied this time by the ancient Dean of Windsor, for the infant prince to be baptized. The Queen, dressed entirely in white lace, waited for the child to be brought to her in the long state *salon* filled with massive mahogany furniture and potted palms. A nervous lady-in-waiting, unaccustomed to handling children, took the baby, engulfed, as it were, in a dress of lace and lawn, from his nurse, transported him down the long room and presented him to Her Majesty. Queen Victoria bent over the tiny face of her great-grandson, who, with patent disregard for the etiquette the situation demanded, emitted a gurgle and with his tiny fist knocked the Queen's spectacles askew. The Queen promptly handed him to the Dean, who christened him hurriedly to the accompaniment of screams, and then passed him on to the lady-in-waiting. She in turn, obviously afraid of babies, carried the infant back to his nurse, holding him as far from her as possible as though he were a bomb.

The father of Prince Louis of Battenberg, Prince Alexander of Hesse, had contracted a morganatic marriage with Prince Louis's mother, the Countess of Hauke, a lady-in-waiting to his sister, the Czarina of Russia. This caused their children to be excluded from succession to the sovereignty of Hesse, and as a consequence they were given the name and title of Battenberg, derived from a town in the upper part of the Grand Duchy. Prince Louis had become a British subject and joined the British Navy when he was fourteen years old, and at the time of Dickie's birth, after thirty-two years' service, was a captain. He had had a distinguished career, first as a young lieutenant, when he accompanied the then Prince of Wales, who was to become Edward VII, on his tour of India, Australia, the Fiji Islands and Japan, and subsequently in charge of a naval contingent

## THE YOUNG PRINCE

at the shelling of Alexandria. While Dickie was still young his father became Director of Naval Intelligence and finally First Sea Lord. He was a tall and strikingly handsome man with a moustache and Van Dyke beard, which made him look like a cross between a French diplomat and a Russian general. Commanding and serene, he had sudden flashes of humour which somewhat startled those who knew him only slightly.

The baby's mother was Princess Victoria, daughter of the Grand Duke of Hesse and Princess Alice, daughter of Queen Victoria. Although not a talented woman, she was extremely cultured. With equal ease she could discuss with a musician the intricacies of a Bach fuge or argue the fine points of a Balkan border dispute with a career diplomat.

Prince Louis, as has been said, was stationed in London as Director of Naval Intelligence during Dickie's early years. It was here that his education started under the direction of his mother, who all her life wished she had been a school teacher and instructed him in the elements of Latin and mathematics, history and geography. She had several guiding principles in the bringing up of her children, and to these she strictly adhered. Most important was her insistence that her children should not make themselves a nuisance to those around them. If they wanted pets, they had to feed and look after them and were not permitted to delegate this task to the servants. If they wanted to stage mock battles with lead soldiers, it was a punishable offence not to pick them up afterwards and replace them neatly in their boxes.

If Princess Victoria was strict about not giving the servants trouble, she was even stricter with her children about not taking advantage of the position to which they had been born. She was determined, when they were playing with a gardener's or woodsman's child, that they should show no condescension or display any feeling of superiority. It was understood that they were always to stand strictly on equal terms with all their contemporaries.

She felt equally strongly that her children should talk freely with their parents. Both she and her husband used to discuss with them any problems which happened to present themselves. Theirs was quite the opposite technique from the "Now-run-along-and-play-and-don't-bother-your-elders" kind of upbringing. If the children displayed some crotchet, or curious twist of view on a subject, they were not merely told, "Dearest, don't be silly." Their ideas and opinions were seriously discussed.

Once, young Dickie was convinced that the back *salon* in their London house was a den of wild animals.

"There are bears and wolves in there!" he would shriek as he vehemently refused to go past the curtain separating the front *salon* from the back.

"There are no animals in there, Dickie," his mother tried to reason with him.

He, however, would not be convinced. "It's no good your saying there aren't bears and wolves in there, because if I really think there are it doesn't do much good, does it?" the child piped.

This logic was irrefutable, so the bears and wolves remained for the time skulking amongst the chairs, davenports and dark draperies.

The family, when not in England, would either spend their holidays in Russia or go for a month or so in the summer to Heiligenberg, Prince Louis' estate in the upper part of the Grand Duchy. There they lived in a vast, irregular *schloss*, in the Rhenish style of architecture, with low sloping roofs and a square tower. From the windows on the entrance side of the house could be seen the vine-clad slopes and red-roofed farmhouses of a rich and fertile valley, while the windows in the rear opened on hills covered with forests of fir where one could imagine salamanders lurking under the ferns or deer fleeing between the tree-trunks. Woods and fields supplied the growing boy with pets. His great favourite was a turtle, which had been found in the garden and presented to him by one of the under-gardeners. It was kept in the house, and, as is the way with turtles, soon disappeared, only to be discovered a week later quite dead under his mother's chiffonier. She thought the news of his pet's death would upset him, so she broke it to him as gently as possible, taking care to hide the corpse.

"I am afraid your turtle is dead, Dickie," she said, "and I think you should give him a funeral in the garden."

The child instantly asked to see it. When it was produced he examined the shell and began knocking on it to find out if the head would not then appear. When it failed to emerge, as it was wont to do, he nevertheless argued stoutly, "I still don't think he is dead—just asleep."

When his mother assured him that it really was quite dead he bent down towards it again and replied, "Well, he doesn't *smell* dead, so he can't be, and until he does I won't bury him."

He was not a child who unquestioningly accepted the suggestions of others. His youthful training in reasoning had taught him to question. His extreme caution showed itself once when his aunt asked him, "What would you like to be when you grow up, Dickie?"

"I haven't quite decided yet," he replied solemnly.

"Perhaps you would like to be a soldier?" he was prompted.

"No," he said firmly; "soldiers always get shot."

"Well, would you like to be a sailor?"

"No," was the equally firm reply; "ships always sink."

"What about being an engine-driver?" persisted his aunt.

"No," was the rejoinder; "the engine might go over the embankment."

At the age of four Dickie was developing into a sensitive, affection-

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ate child, and forming deep attachments for people and things. In Germany he was usually lonely on the family estate, for there were few children of his own age to play with. It was natural, therefore, that he should be excited when he was told that he had a new-born niece, the daughter of his elder sister, wife of Prince Andrew of Greece, and that she was coming to visit them at the castle. Now he was going to have a new companion, and he felt also he was old enough to have nieces like his brother and his father's friends, but when she arrived all the proud Dickie could see was a pink face peeping out of a bundle of shawls. In a fit of chagrin he let loose at the foot of a tree a squirrel he had caught that morning with great difficulty, especially to amuse her. During the next few days the baby did nothing but wail. One day, when his nurse was going up to the suites of rooms where the children lived, she found Dickie sitting despondently on the top stair, his hands supporting his chin.

"What is the matter with you, Dickie?" she asked.

"I think this house was a great deal nicer before crying babies came," was Dickie's contemptuous reply.

Although as a child he was obstinate and self-willed, he had the redeeming qualities that often go with these characteristics in childhood. He was straightforward and sincere. When Mrs. Crichton, Princess Victoria's lady-in-waiting, scolded him, she could never be quite sure what his response would be. Sometimes he decided the scolding was justified and accepted it calmly, with the promise to behave himself better in the future, but on other occasions he became passionately rebellious.

"You are a difficult boy," she said to him one day when he was sulking after a minor scolding. "One can never tell how you are going to take a rebuke. You should be labelled when you are in your 'moods'." She left him to think this over. When she next saw him he had a large piece of cardboard on his chest with the letters "I.A.O." printed on it and a frown on his round face.

"What does 'I.A.O.' stand for?" she inquired.

"It stands for *I am offended*," replied Dickie, "and I shall wear it every time I *am* offended, so, you see, I shall be labelled."

For some time afterwards he would carry the sign under the blouse of his sailor suit, and when he was offended out it would come.

As is the case with many children, one of the chief and most frequent causes of irritation and ill-temper was his nurse, to whom he was really devoted. This poor creature would sometimes find her bed a burial ground for the salamanders which young Dickie caught in the woods near Heiligenberg, and indeed at others was the object of direct physical attack. On one such occasion his mother was provoked to lock him in



her clothes-closet with instructions "not to come out until you are good".

After a few minutes, thinking he might be frightened by the darkness, she relented and released him with a confident, "I am sure, Dickie, you are good now."

"I am not good yet," was the firm reply as he emerged from the closet. With a defiant look he passed his mother, still trying to convince him that he was good, marched upstairs, struck his startled nurse again, came downstairs and retired into the closet. Half an hour later he rattled on the door.

"I feel I am good now," he said, and was released.

The sensibility which made him respond violently to almost every situation manifested itself in imaginative sympathy with the sufferings, inconveniences and disasters of other people. He would often say, as a child, that he loved his brother George, eight years his senior, more than any other member of the family. When he was seven he was very upset when he learnt that a tip of five pounds, sent George by his uncle the Czar of Russia, had been stolen from a jacket which he had left in his locker at the Royal Naval College. Young Dickie decided to make up this loss to his brother. All he had at the time was his weekly allowance of pocket-money, so, after much thought, he hit on the idea of pawning his mechanical toys to his mother and also managed to persuade her to give him several weeks' allowance in advance. In this way he collected ten shillings and solemnly presented this sum to George, who, forewarned by his mother, received the gift with suitable solemnity and gratitude. On another occasion he again pawned his toys and whatever valuables he possessed to his mother after he had read in a newspaper the lurid accounts of the many women and children made homeless and people killed in the Messina earthquake.

His vivid imagination pictured the suffering of the inhabitants of the ruined town. As he sent off the seven shillings and sixpence he had collected to relieve the situation he said, "Well, now everyone will be able to have a warm dinner," adding doubtfully, "won't they?" His mother assured him they would.

When he was five his father was relieved of duty as Rear-Admiral in charge of Naval Intelligence and given Command of the Second Cruiser Squadron, which, after a goodwill tour to America, was permanently stationed at Gibraltar. Here young Dickie shocked his family by his violent objection to being inoculated for the first time.

"I won't have that needle stuck into me—I'm frightened," he protested, screaming. His imagination had endowed the mysterious instrument with fearful qualities.

If imagination sometimes made him a coward, cowardice was by no

means a characteristic. Two years later he contracted typhoid fever in Malta, but this acute illness did not frighten him at all. When he was strong enough to sit up in bed he proceeded to write *The Adventures of Rob and Bob*, two policemen who had a series of sensational encounters with bandits. Although he has written some fine books since, *The Adventures* remains his only attempt at fiction.

When Dickie was seven his father became Vice-Admiral and Second-in-Command of the Mediterranean Fleet based at Malta. For the young son of a British admiral Malta was about as like paradise as any place could be. Life consisted of a succession of delight, swimming from white beaches in the blue water of the Mediterranean, playing on board his father's flagship with indulgent sailors who showed the seaman's traditional liking for children, and going with his parents, in the Admiral's barge, on picnics to the coves, inlets and cliffs of the island.

It was a period of high spirits, jokes and games of sneezing powders, of cushions that emitted sinister sounds when elders sat down on them, of deceptively realistic bottles of imitation ink spilt on priceless velvets, of sham battles with lead soldiers, of endless masquerade. Dickie had been given a complete Cossack uniform in miniature by his uncle, the Czar of Russia. Another uncle, the Grand Duke of Hesse, had given him a similarly complete uniform of the Hessian Life Guards, and the King of Greece one of the Evzon Guards. This formed the nucleus of a collection of uniforms in which he and his friends loved to dress up. Dickie paid scrupulous attention to every detail in his determination to have each uniform worn correctly. A young friend of his, to whom he had lent one, was met with the irritated comment, "You *are* a sloppy Life Guard." This was followed by painstaking readjustment of the angle of the cap and the hang of the tunic. To this youth, who had been brought up in naval surroundings and who had worn miniature sailor suits made by the sailors aboard his father's ship ever since he had grown out of baby dresses, there was something inviolable about a uniform.

Like all sons of well-to-do parents in England, Dickie was sent to a preparatory school, Locker's Park, at the age of ten. His parents chose this place of learning because it was small and exclusive and some of Dickie's royal cousins had gone there. The first lesson he learnt there was not scholastic but one which was to be an asset to him throughout his subsequent career. Though not pugnacious by nature, he early found it necessary to establish his position by fighting a few of the older boys who exhibited their inverted snobbery in unflattering references to "His Serene Highness". Four years later, when he became a cadet, he had to repeat this performance, for at the Royal College, Osborne, the boys who had risen to the exalted heights of the second term were intent on impressing their superiority physically on those in the first. One boy, who had

known Dickie at Locker's Park, was taking advantage of his seniority, so Dickie found it necessary to knock him down. The result was the same as at preparatory school: Dickie had no further trouble.

The mature Mountbatten has often told his friends that the policy of fighting over the first issue has saved him endless difficulties throughout his career. When he first arrived in South-East Asia his Commander-in-Chief showed a tendency to consider him a mere figurehead. Mountbatten was quick to establish his own authority and readjust his chief's conception of the position of a Supreme Allied Commander.

After his first fight young Dickie's career at Locker's Park followed a smooth if not brilliant course. He was only moderately successful in most activities, but he was actually bad at football. Prince Louis was somewhat dismayed by this lack of promise. To one who had been exceptionally good at games, had effortlessly achieved the highest marks in any examination, he found mediocrity on the part of his younger son a little disturbing. Georgie, Dickie's elder brother, had fulfilled all the family's brilliant expectations at games and at his studies, so he was generally adjudged "the bright one", while the verdict on Dickie, in those early days, was that he seemed "a little slow".

Georgie's mind was of the sort that finds easy relaxation in the immediate solution of mathematical problems, while Dickie's less agile brain was perhaps more subtle and profound. While George was reaching the more obvious conclusion instantly, the younger brother would probably come to it only after considering a dozen more obscure possibilities, each of which might be quite originally conceived.

It is not uncommon for children of Dickie's unorthodox and imaginative mental turn to be considered a little dull by their teachers and a little odd by their contemporaries, for unorthodoxy in the young is a crime almost greater than felony.

While Dickie was at Locker's Park a far from subtle change was taking place around him. The pleasant Edwardian autumn, after the long Victorian summer, was dying. Shadows were closing in on palace and cottage and dark clouds were banking up on the eastern horizon. The 100 years' *Pax Britannica* after Waterloo was coming to an end, though no one yet knew that the fabric of society was going to be torn to tatters by the upthrust of dark and irresistible forces. A world and a way of life were about to perish, and the unity of Dickie's clean and cheerful cosmos was soon to be shattered by war. During a function at Darmstadt, after an evening of indulgence in unflattering remarks about his cousin Edward of England, the Kaiser had told Prince Louis' sister that the political situation was getting "hectic" and had suggested that "Louis, with his intelligent comprehension of the state of affairs, could be very useful to Germany." Indeed, he had been so incautious as to declare

his views to Prince Louis himself, after the Agadir incident, when he screamed at his cousin: "England has not got to interfere. England shall not be allowed to interfere!" When Prince Louis returned to London he felt it his duty to report this conversation to the King, for it had convinced him that the Kaiser meant to fight.

In 1910 he was Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, and in March 1911, as Vice-Admiral, he was given command of the Third and Fourth Divisions of the Home Fleet. Nine months later he was appointed Second Sea Lord of the Admiralty, and in July of the following year he was named Admiral in charge of the Blue Fleet during manœuvres. By 1913, when young Dickie had left Locker's Park to begin his naval training as a cadet at Osborne, his father occupied the responsible post of First Sea Lord under a young and promising Cabinet Minister named Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty.

His father's promotion and the threat of war brought about two changes which affected young Dickie. One was the removal of the family to Mall House, the official residence of the First Sea Lord, a large establishment with a great marble staircase near the Admiralty Arch in London. The other was his father's increased preoccupation with work. Prince Louis would spend almost every day preparing Cabinet memoranda on such varied subjects as the insurance rates for merchant shipping during war-time or the necessity of modernizing coastal fortifications.

With his deep understanding of the German mentality he saw war directly ahead. He also saw the British Navy unprepared. During the 100 years which had elapsed since the death of Nelson it had fought no major fleet action and had been lulled into a false sense of security sustained by a conviction of invincibility. Most of the high-ranking admirals had spent their lives preoccupied generally with peace measures rather than with preparation for future war. Prince Louis now made desperate attempts to accomplish overnight the task of years—the task of bringing the Navy face to face with modern reality.

Young Dickie used to come home from Osborne for his vacation to find Mall House the centre of feverish activity. Several times while the rest of the family was away he had lunch with his father and a plump, young-looking man who smoked cigars and talked with a slight lisp. This was Winston Churchill.

If Prince Louis was worried about the future he never showed his fears to his family, but always joked about the prospect of war with Germany. One morning at the breakfast table he told them he had dreamt that he was standing with his brother-in-law, Prince Henry of Prussia, Grand Admiral of the German Fleet, on an endless stone jetty looking out to sea. Prince Henry was saying: "Bah! The British Navy is useless. Her fleets are no good at manœuvres, her captains are cowards, her ships

are out of date. Our German Navy can manœuvre better than any other navy in the world, our fleet is the most modern in the world and our captains are the most heroic." Prince Louis dreamt that he quietly replied, "What you say may be true, but I doubt if your navy can berth their ships like this." With that he made a signal with his hand and over the horizon sped three squadrons of battle-cruisers heading for the jetty. On and on they came. As they got nearer they did not slacken speed but headed right for the place where Prince Louis and Prince Henry of Prussia stood. Then, still at full speed, they piled headlong on to the jetty with a terrific concussion.

But the question of approaching war was doubtless far less important to Dickie than his new cadet's uniform and the great excitement of being in his first term at Osborne. Gone was all the freedom of Locker's Park. Here life was strictly regulated around a schedule which comprised seamanship, training in small boats, and studies dominated by mathematics. Now also was reverential respect to be paid to his seniors. The boys in the class ahead of him seemed to be endowed with all the freedom and sophistication imaginable. They could go to bed half an hour later than he or his term-mates and, most important of all, they were allowed to wear watch-chains.

While young Dickie was suffering from the attention drawn to him by the tremendous success of having some photographs he had taken of a naval review printed in the school magazine, the situation in Europe was the cause of great activity at the Admiralty. The growing international tension is best described by Winston Churchill in *The World Crisis*:

"But there was a strange temper in the air. Unsatisfied by material prosperity, the nations turned restlessly towards strife internal or external. National passions, unduly exalted in the decline of religion, burned beneath the surface of nearly every land with fierce, if shrouded, fires. One might think almost the world wished to suffer. Certainly men were everywhere eager to dare. On all sides the military preparation, precautions and counter-precautions had reached their height. France had her three years' military service; Russia her growing strategic railways. The ancient empire of the Hapsburgs, newly smitten by the bombs of Sarajevo, was a prey to intolerable racial stresses and profound processes of decay. Italy faced Turkey; Turkey confronted Greece; Greece, Serbia and Roumania stood against Bulgaria. Britain was rent by faction and seemed almost negligible. America was three thousand miles away. Germany, her fifty million capital tax expended on munitions, her army increases completed, the Kiel Canal open for Dreadnought battleships that very month, looked fixedly upon the scene and her gaze became suddenly a glare."

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The match was lit on June 28 by the murder of the Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo. The events which followed fast are familiar enough. Although war did not look immediately inevitable, the Kaiser's sailing on a cruise in the Baltic was the signal for the war parties of Germany and Austria to take control. Everybody began to discuss the prospect of a "brisk, lively war".

Vienna sent a note to Serbia couched in the strongest terms, terms that a sovereign power could not possibly accept. Britain and Russia, still hoping that a peaceful settlement might be reached, tried to mediate, but Belgrade's reply to Vienna, though conciliatory, was unacceptable. The Austrian Minister left Belgrade. Austria mobilized eight army corps. It was the week of July 20, 1914.

Early that year, Prince Louis had said to Churchill: "For the past three years we have held Fleet manœuvres in the spring. If we hold manœuvres again now we shall probably teach the Germans more than we know ourselves. In any case we have tried every Fleet manœuvre we shall ever have to use. What we don't know, and what we must learn, is how quickly we can mobilize the Fleet down to the last coal-scuttle."

Accordingly the Fleet had been mobilized for two or three weeks in July and on the crucial week-end of the 25th was to be demobilized again. All ships were to return to their various ports and both crews and officers were to be given leave. If these intentions were to be carried out over this fateful week-end it would mean that in case of war Germany would be in a position to raid the coast of Great Britain while Britain would have not even enough effective strength to keep the Channel open for the transport of troops to France.

Prince Louis, with his European background, was powerfully aware that one of the sparks flying around the Continental powder keg was going to ignite it at any moment. But, for the most part, official Whitehall remained calm and customary schedules were kept. Despite the rumour that Austria was not satisfied with the Serbian acceptance of the ultimatum, Churchill went down to Cromer to join his family on the fateful week-end of July 25, leaving Prince Louis in charge of the Admiralty. The events of the week-end are vividly described in a letter Prince Louis wrote to his wife the day war was declared, and quoted in Admiral Mark Kerr's biography of him:

"The Mall House,

"Admiralty.

"July 28th, 1914.

"Ministers with their week-end holidays are incorrigible. Things looked pretty bad on Saturday, on which at 6 p.m. the ultimatum that Vienna sent Belgrade expired. Asquith, Grey, Churchill, and all

the rest left London. I sat here all Sunday reading all the telegrams from Embassies as they arrived. On Monday morning the big Fleet at Portland had orders to disperse, demobilize and give leave. I took it upon myself to countermand everything by telegraph on Sunday afternoon. When the Ministers hurried back late that evening they cordially approved my action, and we had the drawn sword in our hands to back up our urgent advice. I breakfasted with the King on Monday morning to report the action taken."

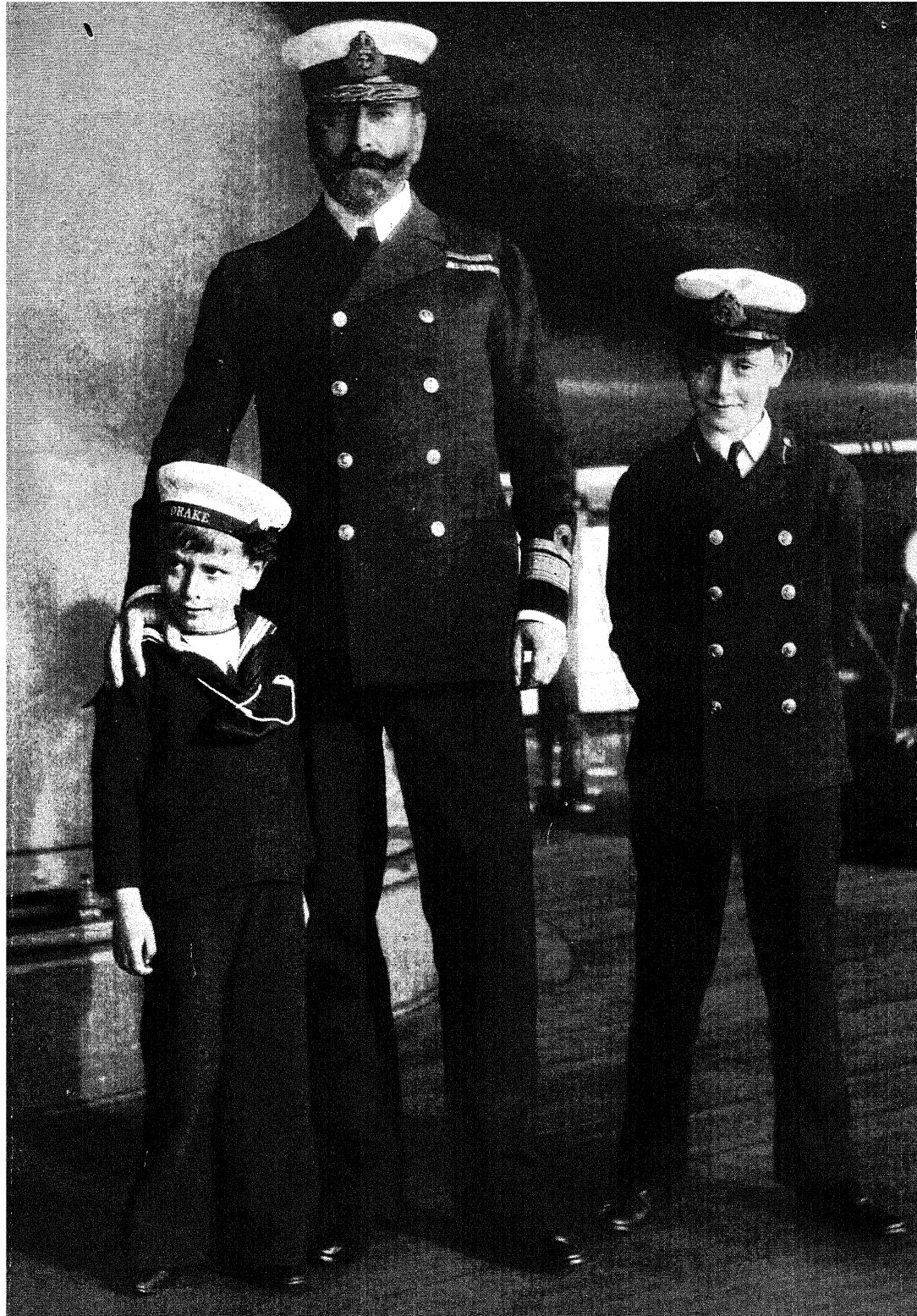
Approximately a year afterwards, when the tragedy of Gallipoli had somewhat dimmed the nimbus surrounding the name of Winston Churchill, Prince Louis received a letter from an admirer saying that a gold statue should be erected in his honour for his action in giving the order that kept the Fleet mobilized. Prince Louis replied graciously, explaining how he had had to issue the order on his own responsibility only because he had been unable to get in touch with the First Lord. The admirer subsequently published this correspondence in the newspapers, not intending to be malicious but in the interest of seeing that credit was given where it was due. Capital was immediately made of this information to discredit Winston Churchill. On hearing of this, Prince Louis wrote the following note to Churchill clarifying the events of the Sunday in question:

"Kent House,  
"East Cowes,  
"Isle of Wight.  
"19th August, 1915.

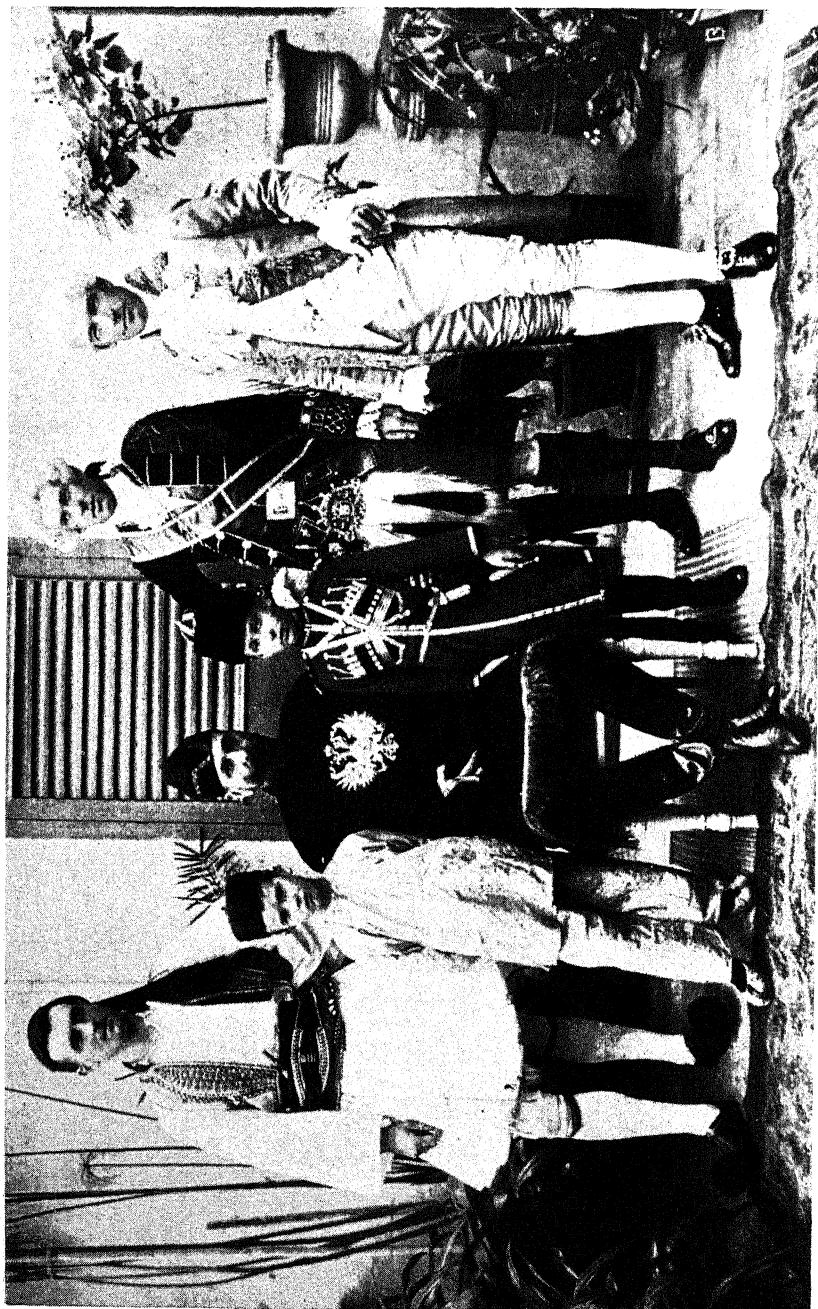
"Dear Mr. Churchill,

"I notice from the newspapers that the—unauthorized—publication of a private note of mine concerning certain action which I took when in charge of the Admiralty on July 26, 1914, has been made the basis of various strictures on you. I greatly regret this, since you as First Lord and I as First Sea Lord, acted during this critical time in perfect harmony, and with absolute mutual trust, as is shown by the following statement of what occurred at the Admiralty on that day.

"The news from abroad on the morning of July 26 was certainly in my opinion very disquieting, and when you called me up on the telephone from Cromer about lunch-time I was not at all surprised to hear you express the same view. You then asked me to take any steps which in view of the foreign situation might appear desirable. You reminded me, however, that I was in charge of the Admiralty and should act without waiting to consult you. You also informed me you would return that night instead of next morning.







*Courtesy of Mrs. Richard Crichton*

Fancy Dress Ball at Malta, 1907.

Picture shows *left to right*: Lieut. Wells, R.N., A. L. C. Savory, Prince Louis of Battenberg, Dickie, Lieut. The Hon. R. Armond, R.N., Captain H. W. Savory

## THE YOUNG PRINCE

"After making myself acquainted with all the telegrams which had reached the Foreign Office, and considering the different steps towards demobilization, which, in the ordinary course of events would have commenced early next morning, I directed the Secretary, as a first step, to send an Admiralty Order by telegraph to the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleets at Portland to the effect that no ship was to leave that anchorage until further orders. For the time this was sufficient.

"You fully approved of this when you returned, and we then, in perfect accord, decided upon the further orders as they became necessary, day by day.

"Pray make any use you like of this letter, and believe me to be

"Yours very sincerely,

"(Signed) LOUIS BATTENBERG."

Prince Louis' successor as First Sea Lord, Admiral Lord Fisher, confirmed the decisive strategic importance of this order to the Fleet in a characteristic memorandum to Lord Esher:

"AN AMPHIBIAN PROJECT continued and WHY  
CHERBOURG WAS SAFE. LORD FISHER

### "WHY CHERBOURG WAS SAFE

"Well, why didn't the Germans land thus in the vicinity of Cherbourg? I will tell you why!

"I had the advantage of knowing the contents of a letter written by a person in the German Fleet to his friend, only a few hours after the outbreak of war on Aug. 4, 1914, and he said to his friend that the German Fleet had been foiled by the readiness of the British Fleet—so unexpected by them; but apart from this very striking testimony we have it on incontestable authority that, could the Germans have rushed the English Channel at the first outbreak of war, then the Cotentin Peninsula would have been their Frederick the Great's Pomeranian coast and Paris would have been theirs in a few days!"

Things were moving too fast over the next few months for anybody to care who gave the order for the mobilization of the Fleet. With the declaration of war came an un-British wave of hysteria. The expansion and increasing prosperity of the secure British world had come to a sudden end. Day after day more troops were mobilized and day after day the casualty lists grew longer. The tension in the mind of the average citizen

showed itself in a curious way. Romantically, he expected everybody who had a German name to be a traitor. German governesses and maids who had not been in touch with their native country for years were dismissed and sometimes even denounced as spies. People who took Dachshunds for an airing were hooted in the streets.

A long list of people from the Prime Minister down were denounced by the *Globe*, a sensational rag, as being in the pay of the Kaiser. Prince Louis was not overlooked. One day blazing headlines, referring to Prince Maurice of Battenberg, Prince Louis' nephew, announced, "Cousin of the King killed at Ypres." On the next page heavy black type declared, "Prince Louis of Battenberg is a traitor." Such was the hysteria of the hour.

What was said about Prince Louis in the papers was, regrettably, an echo of what was being whispered about him in the London clubs by envious naval officers, mostly on the retired list. This slander, when he heard of it, shocked him. It kept spreading, and Prince Louis, fearing he might undermine the confidence of the British public in the Navy by continuing to hold the post of First Sea Lord, handed in his resignation to Winston Churchill, who had solemnly assured him when he was first appointed two years before that his German birth would not affect his position in the event of war.

So it was that the Royal Navy at a crucial time lost the leadership of a man of undeniable loyalty and greatness. His resignation deeply affected not only his whole family but also many men who had served with him. But he personally never lost his sense of humour about it.

Shortly after his resignation General Sir Henry Wilson, meeting Prince Louis on Pall Mall, called out: "Hello, Admiral, I'm uncommonly glad to see you. Heard you were in the Tower."

"Behind the times as usual, Henry," he replied. "I was shot last Thursday."

George, who was at the time a lieutenant in command of a turret on a battle-cruiser, received a delegation from the gun crew who told him, "We have come to express our deep horror at what has happened to your father."

Whatever was said came too late, for Prince Louis had ended a career of forty-eight years in the service which had been his sole preoccupation. There was nothing to do but return to his property in the Isle of Wight.

Here Prince Louis tried to occupy his mind by cataloguing a collection of medals, commemorating famous naval battles, which he had long been forming. His two sons, much as their father's retirement affected them, continued to follow their naval careers as before. Young Dickie finished his six terms at Osborne in the customary two years and then went on to Dartmouth. Here, because of the pressing need for midship-

men, the usual two years had been compressed into a year, after which the youngsters were sent to sea.

His career at Osborne and Dartmouth was particularly distinguished only by one incident. This occurred when he was lying in the hospital recovering from an ankle broken while skating. To alleviate his loneliness and boredom he put an advertisement in the local paper saying, "A young naval officer injured and in hospital desires correspondence." The letters in answer to his plea, some of which contained proposals of marriage, numbered about 150. All were met with a discreet if amused silence by Dickie, but he sent them on to his brother's ship, where several officers started a reciprocal correspondence. But, for the rest, Dickie's school career had nothing remarkable about it. The records show that he stood thirty-fifth of eighty in his "term", passing out of Osborne at the end of 1914, and eighteenth of eighty passing out of Dartmouth, taking exams in hospital because of his broken ankle. In the special three-month course at Devonport and the final passing-out exams before going to sea, however, he was top of eighty. He was not made a class captain, which is the equivalent to a prefect, although those who possess "officer-like qualities" were usually selected for the post. The only other activities recorded of Dickie's school career are that he was drummer in the cadet band at Dartmouth and went in for fencing with single-sticks, getting a second place in the 1915 school competitions. The people I have talked to who were in the same enterprises as he describe him as having been very hard-working, passionately interested in military decorations and rather worried about the condition of his complexion.

In July 1916 young Dickie was fortunate enough to join as a midshipman the most desirable ship in the Navy. This was the battle-cruiser H.M.S. *Lion*, flagship of Admiral Beatty, the most dashing young admiral of the war. She was based in the Firth of Forth, and so was in a better position to lead her fleet, i.e. the "Battle-Cruiser Fleet", against what was left of the Germans than the Grand Fleet, which was based further north of Scapa. H.M.S. *Lion* had already become legendary in the Navy for the part she had played in the great battles of Jutland, Dogger Bank, and Heligoland. Dickie joined the ship too late to participate in any of these actions, but life aboard was interesting for the young midshipman.

Three months after Dickie had joined the *Lion* Beatty left her to succeed Jellicoe in Command of the Grand Fleet. The new Admiral, Sir William Pakenham, brought with him Dickie's brother George as one of his staff officers. But the brothers did not have a chance to see too much of each other, for their quarters were in different parts of the ship. The senior officers (of whom Georgie was one) share the ward-room and the sub-lieutenants and midshipmen the gun-room. The gun-room aboard the *Lion* was in many ways ideal, for it was not, as it often is, the

centre of rivalries, hatred and arguments between men of different temperaments and interests forced into too constant association.

If Dickie found this a happy place so far as social relations were concerned, he also found it one of the last of the gun-rooms where one of the more unpleasant customs of Nelson's day was still adhered to. This custom, known as "stunts", was based on the idea that midshipmen were there for the diversion of sub-lieutenants. This meant that such games were played as "fork in the beam", in which one of the old and very superior sub-lieutenants—aged twenty—in the midst of a convivial gathering would suddenly jab his fork into the table or into a handy beam. As this was the signal for midshipmen to get out of the mess, the first who saw it would dive for the door. Speed was an important quality on such occasions, for the sub-lieutenants would immediately assemble at the door and cane out those midshipmen who were in the least dilatory.

Another duty which was expected of Dickie and his fellow midshipmen was to entertain when a party was given. This used to happen fairly frequently when the *Lion* was in port, as leave was never extended beyond seven in the evening. So, instead of being able to spend their evenings in Edinburgh, the sub-lieutenants had to stay aboard ship. Frequently, under such circumstances, they were invited over by sub-lieutenants from other ships. On these occasions beer was drunk, and the midshipmen were expected to take part in anything from an impromptu tragedy to a spirited imitation of the chorus of a London revue, complete with bare legs and mop wigs. These performances offered the sub-lieutenant, who was conducting the orchestra with a long cane, an opportunity to rap the midshipmen's shins if they missed their steps. The midshipmen, however, were compensated with quantities of beer after the performance was over.

I once asked an elderly captain if he had ever known Mountbatten. He replied: "Oh yes. I remember him during the last war playing the part of the principal girl in a pantomime. He was jolly good, too!"

Proof that Dickie was not generally particularly impressive as a midshipman was that his messmates remembered his arrival aboard ship principally by the fact that he had a ribbon sewn on the breast of his midshipman's jacket, while many even of the senior members of the mess who had seen service for a year and fought at Jutland wore no decoration as yet. The ribbon commemorated his presence at the coronation of his cousin, George V.

His shipmates found him very hardworking for his age. After lessons in seamanship, gunnery and torpedo and navigation, he worked assiduously on his notes while the rest of the midshipmen played lightheartedly. No amount of ragging could modify this habit. On the whole he was found to be rather young for his age, full of enthusiasm, ready to try anything,

but not very good at games. His youthfulness showed itself in lightning changes of mood, and this made some of those who served with him at that time question his stability of temperament. Talking to some of them, I found they agreed that there was no particular indication he would become a maker of history in the future.

Once Colonel Repington, veteran London *Times* military correspondent, was spending the week-end with Dickie's brother George and his wife at Rosyth. Officers, though they could not sleep ashore, were allowed to have their wives in residence at the port. The Colonel had been complaining: "I have spent a whole week at Scapa talking to admirals and captains, commanders and commodores, and I have learned nothing about what I have come here to find out, and that is what common sailors of the Grand Fleet are thinking about, what they are looking forward to, or what they think of their opponents. Most distressing."

That Sunday afternoon Repington picked strawberries with a young midshipman who had come up to spend Sunday with his family. Afterwards he said, "You know, that young Snotty gave me a better, more imaginative and more sympathetic picture of life in the Grand Fleet than I have been able to get from half the gold braid in the Navy."

In July 1917 the family name of Battenberg was changed to Mountbatten. This was done at the request of the King, who at the same time changed his own family name from the German "Wettin" to the English "Windsor". The name Mountbatten is not, as is generally supposed, merely the English translation of Battenberg. It is also the name of some Crown property at the naval port of Plymouth. Prince Louis now became the Marquess of Milford Haven and his elder son the Earl of Medina, while Dickie received the title Lord Louis Mountbatten, a courtesy accorded by custom to the second son of a marquess. This change took place when Prince Louis was staying with his son Georgie, who during the war had married Nada, daughter of Grand Duke Michael of Russia. When he arrived he wrote in the visitors' book, "Arrived: Prince Hyde," and below, on leaving, "Departed: Lord Jekyll."

In February 1917 young Dickie followed Admiral Beatty to his new flagship, H.M.S. *Queen Elizabeth*. His life there was very much the same as it had been aboard the *Lion*, except that now because of his seniority he did not receive quite so much caning as before. Shortly after his eighteenth birthday he was promoted to the rank of sub-lieutenant. After his promotion he was appointed second-in-command of H.M.S. *P-31*, a small escort vessel, whose purpose and construction were about equivalent to those of a modern corvette. He was visited by one of his childhood playmates, Archie Savory, shortly after he had joined his tiny new ship and spent the whole afternoon showing his young friend about it, explaining what this device would do and what that lever was

## LAST VICEROY

for. He thought the *P-31* was the finest ship in the Navy, though his duties were far more strenuous than they had been hitherto. Such small vessels were detailed to escort larger craft across the Channel to afford some protection against the German *U*-boats, for although these were no longer the menace they once had been, they were none the less not to be ignored. This was during the period when Ludendorff was making his last great push, and in those days just before the end the war was at its most critical stage. As a result the convoys were doing double time and the *P*-boats had to do likewise. Frequently they had to make two escort trips across the Channel in twenty-four hours. As there were only two officers on board the *P*-boat, the captain and Dickie, one of them had to stand watch all the time. These seemingly endless watches and his continual responsibility, plus short hours of sleep, proved almost too much for the young sub, who became pale and cadaverous as the summer wore on.

He went home on leave for a short period after one of these trips, much shaken from what he described as a terrible experience. He had been pacing the deck late one night while standing watch, feeling very tired. Suddenly he felt as though the stars, the moon and the sea were whirling around his head. He woke with a start to the sudden realization that he had been asleep on his feet. At a speed of twenty knots this was a dangerous lapse and under any conditions one of the worst offences a naval officer could commit. The manifestation of this sudden weakness in himself caused him serious alarm.

Sub-Lieutenant Mountbatten remained on duty with the *P-31* for nine months after Germany had capitulated. When he went on leave in August 1919 his captain entered the following remarks on his service certificate: "To my entire satisfaction. A most zealous and efficient executive officer, who has shown much tact in dealing with men." Dickie's captain had occasion to be grateful for this trait in his second-in-command shortly after the armistice, when the Portsmouth escort flotilla to which his ship belonged was broken up and *P-31* with several sister ships was sent to Portland to become part of a newly formed anti-submarine flotilla.

Early in the new year orders were received that four *P*-boats were to be retained as the nucleus of a permanent anti-submarine division, while the rest were to be paid off into "care and maintenance", leaving only a small maintenance crew on board, and Dickie's captain was informed by a letter from a friend of his in the Admiralty that *P-31* would be one of the four to remain in commission. He was somewhat surprised, therefore, when in the official Admiralty order *P-31* was included among those that were to go into "care and maintenance". He decided to go to London at once to find out whether or not his ship had been included in error, because he believed his Admiralty "pipeline" to

be an unimpeachable source of information. Before leaving he instructed his second-in-command, "under no conditions is the ship to be paid off". He arrived too late to catch his friend at the Admiralty that day, and, to complicate the situation, hardly had he left the dockyard when orders were received by Dickie that all ships' companies were to be paid off and returned to their home depots for release or reassignment.

Faithful to his captain's instructions, the young sub-lieutenant did not act on these orders but early the next morning, while on deck, he received a message notifying the officer in command of the *P-31* that Admiral Bernard, then commanding at Portland, would informally inspect the *P*-boats lying alongside the pens on their reduction to "care and maintenance". No word had been received from his captain to tell him whether there had been a mistake in the Admiralty order or not, but he realized that in case there had been it would be extremely difficult to reassemble such a good ship's company if he let the men go. The message stated that Admiral Bernard would be coming on board in half an hour. It was necessary to act quickly, so he called the men together and explained the situation to them. In less than half an hour the ship underwent a complete transformation. All the men who should have left the ship were ordered to collect their kit-bags, their hammocks, their knives, forks and plates, and whatever other evidence there was of their presence on board, and stow it and themselves in No. 1 boiler-room. When they were all crammed inside the coxswain closed the hatch, covered it with a coat of paint, and put up a large sign declaring the paint was wet.

Mountbatten saluted as the Admiral came on board, stood by while he cast a cursory glance over the ship and heard him say on leaving: "I'm afraid that the flotilla has been in a great rush sending their ships' companies away, but with the way our budget has been cut, every day counts, you know. I take it that your ship is now in 'care and maintenance'?"

"We're next door to 'care and maintenance'," replied Dickie unblushingly; and the truth of this statement was attested by the fact that the ship berthed alongside *P-31* was in "care and maintenance".

Next day the headquarters of the Admiral of Portsmouth received a jolt. A message from the Admiralty correcting the previous order said it was not intended that *P-31* should be reduced to "care and maintenance". Headquarters immediately issued orders that every step should be taken to recall the men who had already left the ship. The men were released and the gear redistributed in short order so when the captain returned he was summoned by the Admiral and congratulated on the quick and efficient way in which he had restored his ship to full commission at such short notice.

With the advent of peace young Mountbatten rejoined his family



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at home to find their fortunes greatly reduced, and went with them to stay at "Fishponds", Netley Abbey, a small house owned by Colonel and Mrs. Crichton. Mrs. Crichton had for many years acted as lady-in-waiting to the Marchioness of Milford Haven and boasted that she had been longer in the family than Dickie himself.

In November the Marquess, his wife and their daughter went to Corfu for the winter to get away from scenes associated with the many unpleasant memories of the war years. Meanwhile young Dickie went to Christ's College, Cambridge, under an arrangement with the Admiralty whereby a good many young naval officers were sent to a university, ostensibly to gain the little instruction in the humanities which it is customary for young midshipmen and officers to receive at sea under the supervision of senior officers, but in fact to enjoy a period for the pleasures of youth almost entirely lost in the seriousness and under the responsibilities of war. The two terms that he spent at college were important and valuable to him because there, for the first time, he felt emancipated from the restrictions and regulations which had limited his life and prevented his making for himself even such basic decisions as when he should go to bed.

The mood of England after the First World War ran decorously parallel to the contemporaneous mad rush of the United States "back to normalcy". The Empire had victoriously survived an ordeal that had strained all its resources of blood and treasure. There was blowing off of steam accompanied by a sense of relief, without much uneasiness as yet concerning the shape of things to come. In fact the mood of England in 1919 was rather similar to that of the United States in 1946, a curious blend of self-confidence and irresponsibility, that inaugurated a period of great change in previously unquestioned values and principles. The post-war class at Cambridge in which he found himself was different from any previous class that had passed through the ancient university. It was a class of hard young men, many of whom were four years older than the usual undergraduate and some of whom had commanded platoons or companies on the Western Front or in the Middle East. Meeting these people, living this new and widened life, was an important and vitalizing experience for the young lieutenant. He attended lectures during the day and frequently spent his evening at the "Pitt", an exclusive eating and drinking club, where he would talk and laugh with his contemporaries. There he would hear discussions on the absurdities of Tennyson, the beauties of what seemed to him hideous Italian primitives, the ineptitude of some of Shakespeare's comedies and the worth of jazz. For him it was a clearing and broadening of vistas which probably did much to open a way to different concepts and ideas so that even if he did not follow the quest of the intellectual, at least he recognized its existence.

The only restrictions imposed on an undergraduate in those days were

that he must be back in his college before ten and that guests must leave by twelve. Dickie's week-ends were spent in London, where parties and balls were flourishing again now that the war had come to an end.

Attending Cambridge at the same time were Prince Albert and Prince Henry, Mountbatten's cousins, who were later to become respectively the present King of England and the Duke of Gloucester. Though, when he first arrived both at Cambridge and in London, his acquaintance was limited to his royal cousins and a few young naval officers he had met during the war, he was quick to form friendships and soon found himself involved in a whirl of activity and gaiety.

Mountbatten had the unprecedented honour of being elected to the Union during his first term at Cambridge. This rarely happens, and had never before happened to a serving naval officer. He was also assigned the even more unusual honour of leading the debate against Oxford. One outsider is allowed to participate at the invitation of the leader, and Mountbatten invited Churchill, then Secretary of State for War.

During the debate, while the present King and the Duke of Gloucester sat on the cross benches, and after some distinguished visitors had made ponderous observations, Mountbatten, in the naval evening kit of a lieutenant, rose and addressed the President in these terms: "Sir, in my humble opinion, what previous speakers on both sides of the House have said up to now is tripe." His part in the debate that evening moved his guest, Winston Churchill, hero of a thousand ripostes, to compliment him. "I trust," remarked the Minister for War, "that he will show as great facility in dealing with admirals on their quarter-decks as with his opponents on this platform."

One night at the Pitt Club Lieutenant Mountbatten was looking through a copy of the *Sketch*, where, in casually turning the pages, he saw the picture of a charming débutante. Addressing a friend, he observed how forcefully struck he was by her appearance and asked him if he knew the young beauty. "Yes," was the reply, "her name is Audrey James and she is the most popular débutante of the season." It was arranged that Lord Louis should be introduced to Miss James at a dance the next week-end. They seem to have fallen in love at first sight, for two weeks after their meeting they were engaged to be married.

The remainder of the term passed quickly enough and the social season began to reach its peak when Dickie was spending his Christmas vacation in London. A friend of his tells me that during this vacation young Lieutenant Mountbatten called him by telephone. His voice was very excited.

"Tell me," he said, "do you know Lady Ribblesdale?"

"Why, yes, very well," his friend replied, wondering what was to come next.

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It was a question. "Well, if you know her very well, can you arrange to have me invited to her ball tonight? It is very important that I see David before he goes away, and tonight is my last chance."

"But what is it you want to see David about?"

The answer was mysterious: "I can't go into that now, but it really is essential. Please help."

So Dickie's young friend found himself landed with the unwelcome task of having to telephone to the most important hostess in London at the last moment to ask if he could bring a young friend of his to the ball. Great events hung on the answer, for that evening Dickie was able to collar his cousin David, Prince of Wales, and ask him to confirm a half promise to take him as his A.D.C. on a coming tour of India and Australia.

After the Christmas vacation he returned to college for one more term. Then he joined the Prince of Wales on board H.M.S. *Renown* bound for the Barbadoes, Honolulu, Fiji, New Zealand and Australia. Young Mountbatten was about to begin the cocktail circuit.

### CHAPTER III

## THE PRACTICAL PLAYBOY

FOR a young naval officer of twenty-two the prospect of taking a long cruise with his cousin, the heir-apparent to the greatest monarchy on earth, was certainly golden.

During the voyage of the *Renown* and her stops at the Barbadoes, San Diego, Honolulu, the Fiji Islands and eventually at New Zealand, Lieutenant Mountbatten's time was divided between making arrangements for the Prince, seeing that the schedule ran smoothly, and having as much high-spirited fun as possible.

From New Zealand they went to Australia, where the Prince had to attend a seemingly unending round of Antipodean functions, give many speeches, refrain from reference to Colonial origins, and shake hands with thousands of people. Their reception was enthusiastic. While on the way to Perth by rail, the Prince and Lord Louis experienced a train accident for the first time. The carriage in which they were travelling jumped the rails and turned over, leaving the wheels spinning in mid-air, but fortunately no one was seriously hurt. Lord Louis still tells of the unfortunate positions some of the officials found themselves in after the accident. An old and severe naval captain climbed out of the carriage with a selection of sticky liqueurs making interesting colour patterns on his white uniform, while another elderly gentleman, who was the Prime Minister's representative, had to escape via the lavatory window.

The return trip from Australia through the Panama Canal, and thence to Portsmouth in England, where they arrived early in a rainy October, was without incident. On arrival, Lieutenant Mountbatten learned that his father had at last received the recognition he deserved, for in August he had been made an Admiral of the Fleet on the retired list, an honour only once before granted to anyone in the British Navy. The following letter to the First Lord of the Admiralty explains the event:

“Buckingham Palace.

“August 9th, 1921.

“My dear Lee,

“The King has read your letter of the 8th instant to me with much satisfaction, and is delighted to give his approval of your proposal to promote Admiral, the Marquis of Milford Haven, to the rank of Admiral of the Fleet on the Retired List, to date from August 4th, 1921.

"His Majesty has always felt keenly for Lord Milford Haven, whose distinguished service in the Royal Navy terminated under circumstances which, as you say, could only be regarded as tragic. Nevertheless, Lord Milford Haven bowed to his fate without murmur or complaint, and with that dignity worthy of his generous nature.

"The King is sure that his recognition of his services will be welcomed by the Navy at large.

"Yours very truly,

"STANFORDHAM."

That summer Lord Louis went to the Cowes Regatta. For one brief week every year the shores of the Solent are crowded by day with people eagerly watching the international sailing races, while at night the large country houses of the district are filled with society's personalities bent on looking at each other. This period of picnics and house parties is one of the most important events of the English social calendar.

It was during race week that Lord Louis first became interested in a slender young girl with brown hair and startlingly blue eyes. Since his long voyage with the Prince of Wales, he and the friend of his early youth, Audrey James, had drifted apart, and she had married Major Dudley Coats of the millionaire cotton family. A fine epigram on their engagement was made in a London club. Two gentlemen were discussing Audrey James's approaching marriage to Coats and one was saying, "I can't see why she prefers that fellow Coats to that handsome young lieutenant who is related to all the royalty in Europe." And his friend answered, "Perhaps she prefers the arms of Coats to Coats of Arms."

Now his thoughts were only of this débutante. He danced with her constantly at the various great balls that followed the days of racing. Why she filled his mind can be easily understood. She was a very attractive young person. Her grandfather, Sir Ernest Cassel, was one of the more remarkable figures of the 19th century. An intimate friend of Edward VII, a financial wizard, and one of the great modern international bankers, he had started his financial career at the age of seventeen as an emigrant from Germany, working in a Liverpool office earning the equivalent of fifteen shillings a week. A few years later, Cassel—a British Baruch—was concluding international agreements while his contemporaries were still discussing percentages and profits. He financed the Mexican State Railways, reorganized those of Sweden, rehabilitated the finances of the Argentine, made Egypt profitable by financing the construction of the great Assuan dam, and negotiated loans for China. Cassel's daughter had been the first wife of Colonel Wilfred Ashley, later Baron Mount Temple, a typical 19th-century Englishman interested in huntin', shootin' and politics. Ashley was a descendant of Lord Palmers-

ton and was eventually and suitably to become Minister of Transport in a Chamberlain Cabinet. And so it was that this young girl inherited brains and position, as well as a fortune, from both sides of her family.

Her name was Edwina Cynthia Annette Ashley. The first sixteen years of her life had been spent with her father, a widower since she was five years old, in his great house "Broadlands", surrounded by wide parks and formal gardens. Then her father had married again, so she had gone to live with her grandfather, for whom she acted as hostess at the many parties he gave in his vast mausoleum of a house in London. For a young girl who had been brought up quite simply this was a difficult task, but it soon developed in her a poise and an assurance not often found in hostesses thrice her age.

After Regatta Week at Cowes young Lord Louis was asked to go on a ten-day cruise to Belgium and France on Colonel Cornelius Vanderbilt's yacht, and, as an extra girl was needed to complete the party, Edwina Ashley was also tactfully invited. It was during this cruise that the friendship between Mountbatten and his future wife began to ripen into a deeper attachment. When they returned from the cruise he asked her to come to lunch with his family at "Fishponds", at Netley Abbey, where they were then living. They saw little more of each other during the summer until misfortune by chance brought them together again.

In the latter part of August his father had accompanied Lord Louis on a cruise aboard the *Repulse*, after which the Marquess returned to London to prepare for a trip to Constantinople, where his eldest son, George, was then stationed. He arrived in London after the journey on September 10. He was stopping temporarily at the Naval and Military Club while his wife and his daughter, Louise, were lodging at a nearby hotel preparatory to going to Scotland. The day after his arrival he began to feel ill and asked his family to delay their departure. When they saw him next day they decided he must see a doctor. That afternoon the Marchioness left her husband for an hour and when she returned she found that he had died during her absence. A few days later the body was placed in the private chapel at Buckingham Palace, where a short service was held attended by members of the family. On Sunday the coffin was removed to the Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace, and on Monday the funeral procession started along the Mall, proceeding from there through Admiralty Arch and along Whitehall to Westminster Abbey. Seven admirals and a major-general acted as pall-bearers. At the funeral service every branch of the Royal Family was represented. Later he was buried with full naval honours on the Isle of Wight. After the burial service his wife, the Marchioness of Milford Haven, his eldest daughter, Princess Louise, and his two sons, Louis and George, returned

## LAST VICEROY

to Netley, where Alice, wife of Prince Andrew of Greece, shortly joined them.

That same week Sir Ernest Cassel also died. Edwina had felt as deep an affection for the masterful old financier as Lord Louis for his father, so when they were in London they met constantly, each offering consolation for the other's loss.

In October Lord Louis again had to take up his duties, this time as A.D.C. to the Prince of Wales in the *Renown* during his official visit to India and the East. Before leaving, Lord Louis saw Edwina and told her in effect that he could not be parted from her for so long and that she must pull every string to come to India while the royal party was there. He left, assuring her that she could "easily" arrange it, but to her the idea seemed fantastic. "I haven't enough money even to buy a third-class ticket," she complained. This was true, for her annual dress allowance, which was all she received, was a bare £100 per annum, and out of this she had only a few pounds left for the balance of the year. "Oh, you are sure to find a way to arrange it somehow," Lord Louis assured her optimistically, and shortly thereafter sailed aboard the *Renown* with the Prince of Wales.

Edwina then began wondering where she could find money to buy her steamer ticket. She knew if she could borrow the sum necessary for her passage it would be possible for her, once arrived in India, to stay with Lord Reading, then Viceroy, for he had asked her to visit his family some years before, when he was often a guest at her grandfather's house. The next difficulty to overcome was to get her father's consent, which seemed as insurmountable as the financial problem. She would also have to find someone to act as her chaperon.

The money question was answered when she went down to spend a week-end with an old maiden aunt. To her she made her romantic plea, and by Sunday she had the promise of a loan of £100. This was just enough to cover the round-trip fare to Bombay, in an inside state-room aboard a ship which was an odd cross between a liner and a freighter. The second part of the problem was solved when Edwina found, by carefully looking over the shipping-list, that an eminently acceptable woman, whom she knew slightly, was going on the same ship as herself. She cajoled the lady into consenting to act as chaperon, received her father's consent, and sailed into the sunrise.

The ship was slow, the heat intolerable, and the chaperon not officiously dutiful. Edwina arrived in Bombay with not quite enough money for train fare to New Delhi, where Lord Louis was then staying with the Prince of Wales. She telephoned him as soon as she arrived, and he arranged, through an old colonel he happened to know, to lend her a sum sufficient to buy her ticket to the capital. From the moment of her

arrival life became a little less difficult. She explained the situation to Lord and Lady Reading and, as their guest, attended all the important events, where she had a chance to see, dance, and talk with her future husband. He was not at this time the ideal swain for whom a beautiful young girl would have crossed half the globe. For, after he had finished making constant arrangements for official visits and being a gay companion on all occasions and at all hours to the Prince, Lord Louis, when he could snatch an hour with Edwina after a party, was so exhausted he could do no more than lean gently on her shoulder and go to sleep.

The tour completed, Mountbatten returned to England aboard the *Renown*, enjoying all the luxury incident to travelling with a prince. Edwina, on the other hand, found herself reduced again, after the glories of official life in India, to an inside cabin on a small packet-boat. The weather was hot, the ship slow, and there was no chaperon.

One day, during the return voyage, Edwina was casually glancing at the news bulletins pinned up on a board when she was shocked to read that Lord L. Mountbatten, cousin of the King, had just died. A frantic exchange of radiograms soon established that the Lord L. Mountbatten who died was in fact Lord Louis's first cousin (brother of Queen Ena of Spain), whose first name was Leopold.

She accepted her subordinate rôle with good grace, however, and when they returned to London their engagement was officially announced. At first his mother opposed the marriage on the grounds that his wife, when she came into her estate after she was married, would have more money than he, a condition which does not usually contribute to marital content. This objection was soon dissipated when she had a chance to know the bride-to-be better and to find out what a small part money played in her life. Thanks to her upbringing and character, her tastes were extremely simple.

The wedding was the social event of the season. King George, Queen Mary and Queen Alexandra were present, and the Prince of Wales acted as best man. The ceremony took place in St. Margaret's, the fashionable church adjoining Westminster Abbey. It was, of course, a naval wedding, and the bride and groom passed out of the church under an arch formed by the swords of Lord Louis' brother officers. The reception after the ceremony was as festive as the occasion demanded. The bride, the groom, and the wedding presents were admired and many flattering toasts were drunk to the young couple, who were finally able to escape by car to an undesignated retreat in the country.

As is not often the case with great heiresses whose incomes are equivalent to £100,000 a year, the jewels she received gave her more pleasure than they gave to those who read about them. As she had been brought up simply, she had never possessed anything more



elaborate than a maidenly necklace of seed pearls and a few assorted brooches. So great indeed was her pleasure in the magnificent gifts of jewellery she received that she decided to take them all with her on the motor-trip they planned to take on the Continent, visiting first Lord Louis' cousin, the Queen of Spain, and going later to Darmstadt to visit the Grand Duke of Hesse, his uncle, at Wolfsgarten.

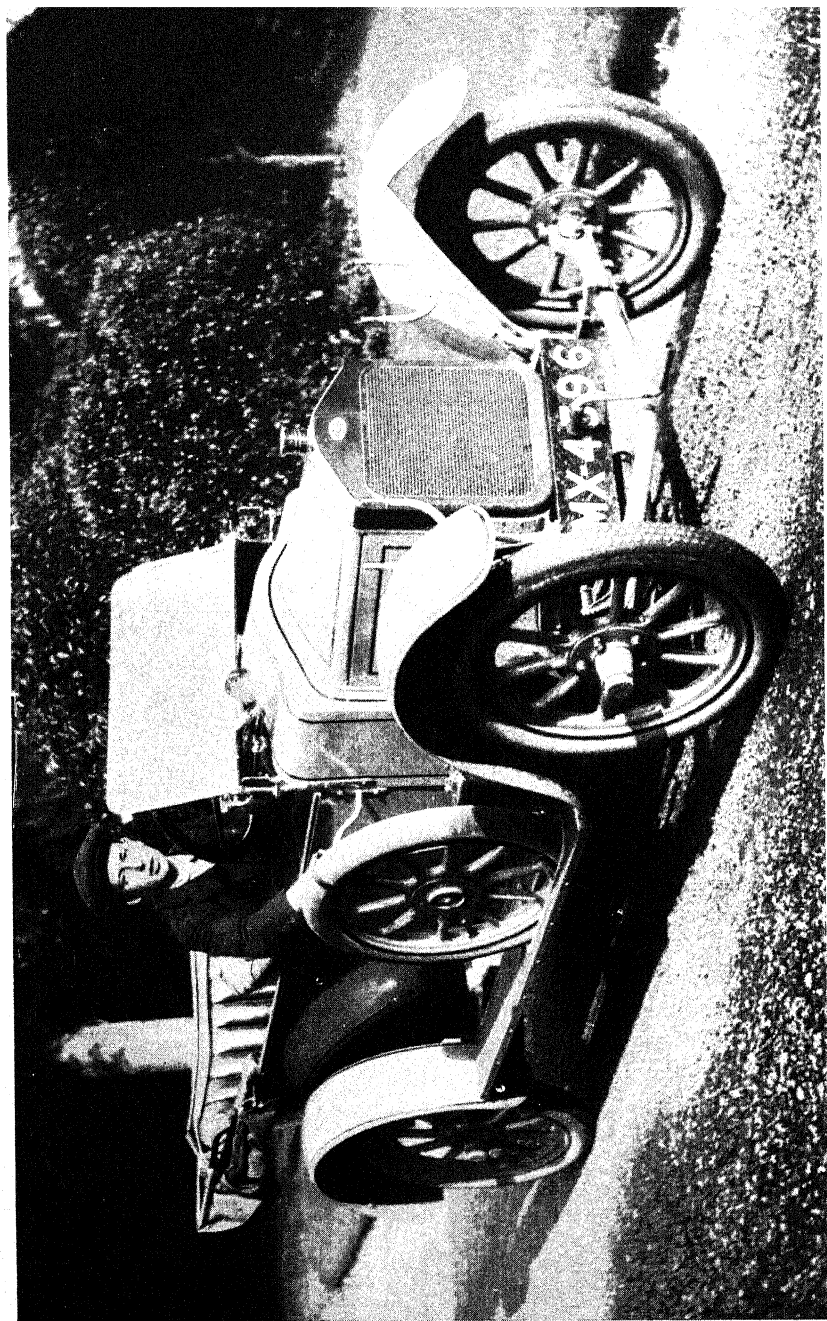
Because of his bride's unshakable determination not to be parted from her newly acquired jewels, Lord Louis thought it the better part of caution to take a pistol with him on their wedding trip. As they drove across France and Spain in their small car, and stayed at many inns where there were no safes, it was often necessary to sleep with the jewel-case under the mattress and the pistol under the pillow. One night, at Angoulême, a burglar actually tried to break into their room. Lord Louis heard him trying to force the window and, in his frantic search for the pistol among the bedclothes, made so much noise that he frightened the burglar away.

It was over the arrangements for their tour through France that the young couple had their first disagreement. As aide to the Prince of Wales Lord Louis had had to make endless travel arrangements—assuring accommodations for so many here and reservations for so many there. This experience had done much to stimulate his inborn passion for organization. No sooner had they decided to take the motor-trip than he started procuring Michelin maps and *Baedekers*. Feverishly he planned routes, allotting so much time to each, and wired for reservations at the various hotels they would stop at. His wife objected. All her life she had been told by governesses that she must be dressed by a certain time, that she must be down for dinner at a certain time, that she must go to bed at a certain time. Her entire life, until she went to India, had been planned step by step, moment by moment. Now it was time to change. She insisted that no reservations be made, so that, if they found a pleasant place, they could spend several days there without having to rush on for the sake of adhering to schedule. Finally Lord Louis consented, but it was with marked reluctance that he gave up the opportunity to provide for every eventuality.

On their first stop of all, at Tours, they were unable to find a proper room in any hotel. They were finally accommodated in an attic, in a single bed, by appealing to the French predilection for newly married couples.

After the honeymooners had been to Spain, crossed France twice, and visited Germany with suitcases full of inflated currency, Lord Louis managed to wangle an extension of leave. The Admiralty, faced with the problem of a plethora of officers and a paucity of commands, had gladly acceded to his request. They decided to extend their honeymoon and do a little more sightseeing, this time in the United States. They arrived in





[Courtesy of A. L. C. Sawo

His first car—Isle of Wight, 1915

New York to be swept immediately into a whirl of gaiety. The first night they arrived a party was given for them by one of those ambiguous little men who seem to entertain the great and gay for no apparent reason. It was here that they met Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, who were then married and both at the height of their fame. As Lord Louis had long been an ardent motion-picture enthusiast, he was unaffectedly delighted to meet them. He told them how, the summer before he had gone to college, he and his brother George had been the actual movie operators of the first movie set in the Fleet, which had been presented by a common friend. He also told them that he wanted to see Hollywood before he returned to England. The Fairbankses promptly offered him the loan of "Pickfair", their house in Beverly Hills, for as long as they wished to stay there. Lord Louis and his lady enthusiastically accepted.

One evening while they were in New York Lord Louis joined a bachelor party to visit Coney Island, with an old friend of his then learning the publishing business in New York, Archie Savory. The evening proved to be a great success, especially for Lord Louis. They all drank orange crush, ate hot dogs, watched the people, enjoyed the side shows, and finally went for a ride on the famous roller coaster. Lord Louis was able to persuade his companions to join him again on two trips, but on the next six he had to enjoy himself alone while his two companions emptily waited for him, regretting their earlier indulgence in hot dogs and crush.

During their two weeks in New York Lord Louis made arrangements for a special railway car to take him and his wife on an informal tour fact-finding the country. Their plan was to go first to Washington, then to Florida, where they arranged to stay with a former friend of Lord Louis' father and do some deep-sea fishing off the coast. After that to go on to Los Angeles and Hollywood, and finally to come back to New York *via* Chicago and Niagara Falls, which they especially wanted to visit because they had been told that all honeymooners went there. When the young couple wrote to their respective families that they were going to spend some time in Hollywood they created a flurry of consternation. At that time the English and the older generation in the United States looked on Hollywood as an annex of Hell, and felt that anybody who went there might just as well have crossed the Styx. When they finally wrote from Hollywood telling that they were living in a house as formal as most houses in England, and that society there was governed by rules of behaviour as strict as in England—which was not much to say—their correspondents were considerably relieved.

Earlier, while they were in Washington, Lord Louis' 'Varsity training in public speaking three years before stood him in good stead, for he was

asked to deliver the principal address at the annual dinner of the American Navy League. The subject was to be the attitude of the Junior Naval Officer to the organization of the Royal Navy. He said he would speak only if the Naval Attaché at the British Embassy, who was his senior, was asked to speak first. According to the newspapers of the day, his speech was a brilliant success and he carried the evening.

Just before Lord and Lady Louis embarked at New York to return to England, after they had completed their tour of the States, a large lunch was given for them by the New York Press Club. Arthur Brisbane, then internationally famous as the Hearst columnist and millionaire advocate of the homely virtues, had the chair. After the lunch was over he toasted the couple in an impromptu speech, saying, "Can we in America produce a young couple of twenty-two and twenty who could possibly be such fine representatives of their country, and do such an excellent job as ambassadors in a foreign country as the Mountbattens have done here in America?"

After Lord Louis had completed six months of official unemployment the couple returned to England on December 22, 1923, where he was to take up once more his naval career as Lieutenant Mountbatten, and his wife was to assume her position as a young leader of society and a great heiress.

In the middle of January Lord Louis was notified by the Admiralty that he was to be assigned to the battleship H.M.S. *Revenge*, which formed part of the international fleet lying at Constantinople because of the Turkish troubles. Owing to the situation, no officers' wives were allowed even to visit Constantinople. To occupy herself in the meantime, Lady Louis opened "Brook House", which she had inherited from her grandfather.

Situated on the corner of Park Lane, on about the most expensive residential site in London, "Brook House" overlooked Hyde Park. It was, in fact, a successful banker's dream-house, pretentious, massive, and ugly. It had been built in the Edwardian era when Imperial expansiveness was expressed in an efflorescence of gross neo-*baroque* detail. The interior of the gigantic pile did not belie its ponderous façades. To enter, one passed through massive portals to find oneself in a lapis-lazuli vestibule, opening on a great hall encircled by three tiers of immense marble corinthian columns twenty feet high, supporting a roof consisting of a glass cupola. The staircase alone was said to consist of eighty tons of Tuscan marble. On the ground floor there were an octagonal dining-room, a "Roman" banqueting-hall seating 100 people, and a ballroom, each complete with gilt, Genoese velvet and damask. To enhance its splendour, literally square yards of expensive paintings, produced by the "great masters", covered most of the space between cornice and

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wainscot. It was opulence on display in its most palpable and unabashed form.

On February 14 (Valentine's Day), 1923, while Lord Louis' ship, part of the Atlantic Fleet, lay in Funchal Bay, Madeira, Lady Louis gave birth to her first daughter, christened Patricia Edwina Victoria Mountbatten. Twenty-two years later this child was to marry the Lord Brabourne whom she had met when he acted as aide to her father when he was Supreme Allied Commander in South-East Asia.

In October 1924 Lieutenant Mountbatten finished his turn of sea-duty and started the Long Signals course for officers at Portsmouth. As this meant he would be stationed there probably for two years, his wife decided to take a house outside the city, so that while her husband could go back and forth to his work they could at the same time enjoy life in the country together. The house she chose was a large, comfortable, ugly modern establishment called "Adsdean", situated twenty minutes out of Portsmouth in the centre of a pleasant park.

Ten years later, on the death of Lord Mount Temple, Lady Louis' father, she was to inherit his superb estate "Broadlands", in the borough of Romsey. Its palladian façades, built at the beginning of the 18th century, are of white stone, and its long front, set in a perspective of gigantic trees, elicited from a G.I. the awed comment, "I suppose when they build a better mousetrap it'll look like that."

The interior of the house is characterized by the magnificent informality found only in houses inhabited for generations by the great. On the walls of the spacious public rooms appear the physiognomies of Lady Louis' ancestors, rendered by Van Dyke and Lely, Reynolds and Lawrence. Meandering through the park, with its orangery, its clipped hedges and "picturesque gardens", flows the Test, the finest and most expensive dry-fly trout-stream in England. It was in this park and mansion that Lord Palmerston strolled and sat while meditating the wise remarks by which he directed Queen Victoria's ingenuous efforts at statecraft.

On inheriting this additional property, Lady Louis gave up her old abode, and in 1937 the family moved to "Broadlands" as their permanent country residence. While they were still at "Adsdean", Lord Louis' life was given over to the ceaseless official activity with which he filled every moment. He would be off to work at eight in the morning and return in the afternoon to get in some golf or polo before the sun went down. Between exercise and dinner he went back to work for several more hours at the Signals School. At the same time he was also engaged in a full-time social life. As a result he had to lay out an almost impossible schedule for himself. The engagement-book on his desk might look something like this:

Madrid, who had had several children and who was a practical woman. The Queen did not happen to be in residence at the time, but her husband, Alphonso XIII, answered Mountbatten's call.

"My wife is having a baby!" Lord Louis told the King.

Alphonso professed his delight and promised he would not tell a soul.

"But I want you to tell a soul!" fumed the expectant father. "I must get a doctor, and I can't find one."

"Marvellous, Dickie, marvellous." Alphonso did not seem to understand. "I will telephone the Governor right away and have a Guard of Honour put around the hotel. You are staying at the Ritz, are you not?"

"Yes," said Lord Louis, "yes," and gave up. The birth, as far as Alphonso was concerned, was a royal affair and no concern of obstetricians and midwives.

The Guard arrived as promised, and was disposed in a cordon around the Ritz, succeeding only in obstructing the entrance of the grey nun and the throat doctor.

On the next day a friend of theirs arrived in Barcelona, and immediately went to the hotel to find out how Lady Louis, the new baby Pamela and the father were. On entering the suite Lord Louis was occupying, he was at first unable to find him. Finally he discovered the new father in the bathroom, sitting on the edge of the sunken bath with his trousers rolled up and his feet in the water, fascinatedly watching the manoeuvres of a diminutive toy boat propelled by a jet of carbide gas.

"Hello, Mark," said Lord Louis, without looking up. "Come and watch this marvellous craft manoeuvre." The baby had been temporarily forgotten.

Early that summer Lord Louis was appointed instructor in wireless telegraphy at the Naval Signal School in Portsmouth. A year later he was made Fleet Wireless Officer of the Mediterranean Fleet, and was back in Malta, where Lady Louis reopened their house, the "Casa Medina", which they had bought three years before. Situated on a hill outside Valetta, it was one of the most beautiful in Malta, although it stood on a street so steep and narrow that pedestrians were crowded against walls, and doors had to be closed when anyone drove up to it in a car. The street bore the unappetizing name of "*guardamangia*", meaning scullery.

Like all Maltese houses, this one was built of blocks of sandstone, which, according to local practice, were laid without mortar. When first cut, the stone is white, but it soon mellows to a butter colour, so that in ten years houses built of it acquire the quality of age, an effect enhanced by the fact that they are all designed in the same classical style. The walls of the interior of the "Casa Medina" were painted in plain white distemper and the rooms were furnished with handsome pieces of Regency and early Victorian mahogany. Most of the windows were curtained with lemon-

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coloured linen, hanging from heavy antique mahogany cornices, and this yellow was echoed by a profusion of marigolds in vases, the only flower—apart from courage—that blooms on the island. Behind the house was a patio and beyond that lay the extensive stables where Lord Louis kept his polo ponies.

When the Mountbattens were in Malta their social status was not always clear. In the ordinary way the position of a junior Lieutenant-Commander and his wife would be established by naval protocol, but the Mountbattens were rich, whereas most naval officers are not well off; they were closely related to the Royal Family, whereas the large majority of naval officers are drawn from the "upper middle class", and they were, of course, very well known because of the publicity given to their activities.

When they arrived, local opinion was divided. The members of one group were curious and anxious to meet these "well-known society people", hoping they would give an unending series of large and lavish cocktail and dinner parties, as other people could not afford to do. This would give the officers' wives a chance to show off their frocks, and possibly an excuse to buy new ones. Opposed to them were those who feared the Mountbattens would flaunt their superior wealth and establish a standard of high and extravagant entertaining. The hopeful and the apprehensive were both disappointed. Between 1927 and 1936, when they spent most of their time in Malta, the Mountbattens led their own lives with a small circle of friends exactly like everybody else. Only during their last sojourn did they give a party. This was their solitary important social event while on the island.

It was a large-scale affair for about 300 guests and was held in the big hall of the Polo Club. Lord Louis secured two bands, the best band of naval ratings and the best local Maltese dance band. In the early part of the evening, and through most of the dinner, the naval band played appropriately soothing semi-classical selections, the sort of music that is supposed to aid digestion. When the last course had been served the Maltese dance band took over and burst into the strains of the Carioca. Lord Louis had so arranged things in the belief that dancing during dinner is a mistake, because, however well the sets may be timed, the food is sure to get cold. Later in the evening some cabaret turns were provided by local entertainers. As a *finale* the lights were turned down, and on a screen, surreptitiously prepared at the end of the room, were shown sections of a moving-picture sequence of Fred Astaire dancing the Carioca. The band had been rehearsed to play the Carioca in the same key in which it was being played on the screen; and as the screen play finished, the band, which had taken its place and imperceptibly faded in, kept on playing the tune. When the lights went up, Lord and Lady Louis,



partnering Lady Fisher and Admiral Fisher respectively, were on the floor.

But the unique feature of the party was the seating of the guests. Around the room, tables were set for eight, six and four. When the invitations had been sent out, each guest had been asked with whom he or she would like to sit, and the place-cards had been distributed accordingly, so that everybody was placed with people he or she liked and no one had to suffer anyone else's bores. As a result the affair was rather like going to a night-club at the Mountbattens' expense. It was an enormous success, such a success indeed that it effectively spiked the guns of those who had attacked the Mountbattens as too aloof or too close-fisted to do their fair share of entertaining on the island.

It was about this time that a new addition arrived from Greece, *via* Paris, to join the members of the Mountbatten family. The newcomer was Philip, blond, high-spirited, eight-year-old son of Prince Andrew of Greece and Princess Alice, sister of Lord Louis. The family had been living in exile in Paris since the boy was a year old, and his father now decided he was to go to England and be brought up an Englishman, and trained in the British Navy. Because of the many upheavals in the government of his own country, which had made him first a prince and an officer commanding a division, then an exile, one of the great regrets of Prince Andrew's life was that his military career had been continuously interrupted. He was anxious for his son to benefit where he had not, and so asked Lord Louis to take charge of the boy's upbringing and train him for a career in the Royal Navy.

Although, when young Philip first came to live with the Mountbattens, his propensity to bully his young cousin Patricia was not calculated to please his uncle, he began gradually to take the place of a son, growing more and more a part of the family as the years advanced. Not having a son of his own, Lord Louis concentrated on bringing this boy up in the true Mountbatten tradition. When Philip was ten he was sent to Cheam Preparatory School, and when he was thirteen to Gordonstoun, where he first began to exhibit signs of outstanding intelligence, self-assurance and sound judgment. Later, in May 1939, he went to Dartmouth as a special entry and won the King's Dirk as the best cadet of the year. He also excelled in football, a distinction he did not share with his uncle. As he grew older it became increasingly evident that his personality more closely resembled that of his grandfather, Prince Louis, than of anyone else. In 1940 he served as a midshipman on various cruisers and battleships, and was mentioned in dispatches. He subsequently became Second-in-Command of the destroyer H.M.S. *Wallace*, and was present at the landings in Sicily. Despite his youth he was lauded by his commanding officer as the best second-in-command

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he had ever had. Although naturally pleased with his nephew's callow successes in the Navy, Mountbatten had always been more interested in the progress he was making in his political education, for he had taken upon himself the responsibility for instruction in this field, and rejoiced to find a pupil so adept. Under his uncle's tutelage Philip not only read standard works on history and economics, but also the ancient Greeks on political symbiosis and Karl Marx on economic egalitarianism. His ability to converse intelligently on all these subjects, coupled with his natural charm and his prowess in the field of sport, made him as great a favourite with the lower decks as he was with his uncle's contemporaries. In 1944 he acquired his desired British nationality, dropping his title and taking his uncle's name, Mountbatten.

During the period Lord Louis was serving in Malta he gained an increasing reputation, amongst his superiors as well as his brother officers, for mechanical knowledge and ability coupled with a determination to improve or alter everything with which he came in contact. Those who knew him merely socially were apt to describe him as gadget-minded, for in the middle 1920s this tendency showed itself both in his personal dress and in his house; but it was the result, in reality, of the passion for improvement already noted.

He was most anxious to cut down the time it took him to dress to an absolute minimum, and adopted zippers to replace the buttons on his trousers. He communicated his enthusiasm for this invention to his two cousins, Prince George and the then Prince of Wales. He also got them to adopt another invention of his, which he called "plus shorts".

Plus shorts, as their name suggests, were a compromise between and an improvement on shorts and plus fours, being shorts which fell below instead of above the knee. They were more formal and decorous than regular shorts, yet possessed the advantages of being almost as cool and allowing equal freedom of movement. Lord Louis also wore shirts with collars attached, when everybody still wore the detachable variety; and had elastic woven into the tops of his socks to eliminate the bother of attaching and adjusting sock suspenders. He was responsible for yet another idea, stretchable shoelaces. Although they looked like the ordinary kind, they were actually made of elastic, so they never had to be untied and he could slip into his shoes instantly merely with the aid of a shoehorn.

"Adsdean" itself did not escape his determination to make everything run more smoothly, efficiently, and differently. The desk in his study was characteristic. It was a maze of buzzers and order-pads on which he would write his instructions for the grooms, the kitchen, the gardener, the chauffeurs, and indeed for the entire estate. Colonel Crichton, who acted as his factor, frequently had to reprimand him for

his excess of energy and his attempt to organize and arrange everything himself, and would exclaim: "Why do you bother to hire me if you are going to attend to everything down to the most minute detail yourself? Give me the orders and I will carry them out."

On the doors of the bedrooms at "Adsdean" there was another of Lord Louis' gadgets. It could be set like an alarm clock to tell the servants at which time the occupant of each room wanted to be called. It was a small disc with a knob in the centre, and by twisting one could register in a small slot in the upper half of the circle the hour at which one wished to be awakened. Like many other inventors, Lord Louis had regrettably lost sight of the human factor when he had this device installed. The gadgets worked wonderfully at first, but after a while the guests began to indulge their English propensity for practical joking. After Lord Louis and others in the household had been aroused more than once at some unearthly hour, because somebody had played tricks with the dials, the servants were given strict instructions to ignore them.

He also took a great deal of pleasure in designing his bedroom in "Brook House". This he called "The Cabin", for it was a reproduction of a cabin in a cruiser, even to the detail of having portholes instead of windows. These were arranged so that they looked out on nothing so earthy as a view of Hyde Park or the roofs of Mayfair, but on a marvelously painted cycloramic view of the harbour at Malta with the Fleet at anchor. By merely flipping a switch, lighting of the scene could be turned from Mediterranean sunlight into starry night, in which the lights of anchored warships twinkled realistically. To complete the effect, it is alleged, he even had an electric motor installed to reproduce the throbbing of a ship's engine.

In 1932 Lord and Lady Louis were able to persuade the trustees of her grandfather's estate to sell the mausoleum-like "Brook House", which was about as well adapted to the modern way of living as a whale to existence on the Sahara Desert, and put up a block of flats in its stead. Their idea was to build a penthouse on the seventh and eighth floors, with a private entrance and lift, like a small two-storey house set back from the face of the building by two terraces, so as to provide garden space on both floors. By making this change they could save almost £14,000 a year in rent alone, for "Brook House" as it stood cost £17,000 a year in rent as opposed to £3,300 for the apartment, to say nothing of the great saving in upkeep.

Planning their new dwelling was a "field day" for both of them. They spent three months in Malta going over its arrangement and design down to the most minute details of decoration. Later, when they were in Cannes, he on one of the Fleet cruises, their architect came down for a three-day consultation. Lady Louis also arranged for Mrs. Joshua Cosden,

who had so magnificently decorated her many houses in America, to come over and advise on the interiors.

The result was both spectacular and comfortable. On the ground floor were reception- and guest-rooms furnished in the 18th-century manner. In the hall hung four magnificent Van Dyke portraits which had formerly adorned "Brook House", while the morning-room was surrounded by glass cases, backed with white rawhide, containing the priceless collection of precious and semi-precious stone carvings which Lady Louis had inherited from her grandfather. The dining-room was large, and when converted into a motion-picture theatre could seat 120 people. On the second floor, above the main reception-rooms, Lord and Lady Louis' quarters opened on Hyde Park. In the centre, two bathrooms connected their adjoining bedrooms, while beyond these were their separate sitting-rooms. Above the guest-rooms were the children's quarters, and above the kitchens the servants' quarters.

On the upper floor all the major items of furniture, including sofas, were built in as part of the finish of the rooms, and the movable pieces, such as arm- and occasional straight chairs, were of tubular-metal construction. One wall of Lord Louis' sitting-room was covered by Mercator's projection of the map of the world. The continents were cut out of plywood, and painted the same colour as the rest of the walls, but their edges, about an inch thick and painted a shade darker, threw them into relief. Here all the furniture was upholstered in rust red, and the woodwork was of a slightly pinkish colour resembling a cedar cigar-box, and the canvas venetian blinds were bottle green. Large windows composed the outer wall of the bedroom, while the opposite side was lined with closets, the doors of which were painted a light green, matching the bedspread and the bathroom beyond. Lady Louis' bedroom had a similar array of windows and closets, but the paint was white, with grey and lemon-yellow touches. Three Dali pen-and-ink drawings adorned it. The walls of her sitting-room were decorated by Rex Whistler, an artist of outstanding ability, with grey and umber scenes of classic ruins. A Chippendale wall clock was actually incorporated into the design at one point.

But the best feature of the penthouse, for Lord Louis, was the high-speed lift running from the tiny private entrance hall on the ground floor to the seventh and eighth floors by way of a bricked-in shaft. It was the latest model from America with doors that opened and shut automatically. Lord Louis, then assigned to the Admiralty, had moved in to sleep in the penthouse before it was completed, attended only by his valet. One evening, three of his friends went round to see him before dinner. He had to leave them to go and dine with the King, then Edward VIII, and when he had gone they stayed on to talk and finish their drinks. One

of them accompanied Lord Louis down in the lift, but reaching the penthouse again, as he supposed, the automatic doors opened on a blank brick wall. This was at a quarter to eight.

Fortunately, the lift had a telephone connected with the butler's pantry. This had been installed as the result of an experience in the old "Brook House" days. A very ancient great-aunt of Lady Louis had once been stuck in the lift for several hours during the night, and afterwards had insisted on the provision of a 'phone. Mountbatten's friend found to his relief that this one had been connected, as he frantically unhooked the receiver. The valet, who answered it, promptly summoned the two remaining friends from their drinks and they all spent the next three-quarters of an hour trying to persuade a new American lift company—or, rather, the only man remaining on duty at the office—to trace the expert who had supervised the installation of this special lift and who was the only person in London who knew how it worked. About 9 p.m. he was finally run to earth in a cinema and came round at once. For more than an hour he fiddled about on the roof and in the basement, moving everything but the lift.

At about 10.15 p.m. Mountbatten happened to be impressing on Mrs. Simpson the wonders of his new lift, the only one like it in London and indeed in Europe. Mrs. Simpson commented that she looked with grave distrust on the first installations of any new mechanical device. She felt they were very likely to go wrong, as they had not been tested by experience, and added that when they did go wrong they could never be made right because the only men who knew how to make them so were invariably unavailable.

"In this case," said Lord Louis, "the question doesn't even arise, as my lift is completely foolproof." No sooner had he finished speaking than a footman came in to call him to the telephone.

Mountbatten returned from the instrument to ask if he and Lady Louis could be excused, as they must rush back to "Brook House", where they arrived to find two fire-brigades and a large crowd blocking Park Lane. The firemen had come at the request of one of Lord Louis' friends, who had grown doubtful of the expert's ability to liberate the prisoner, and had asked that two men be sent round with hatchets and ropes to break down the lift doors on the seventh floor, lower themselves down the shaft, and release the wretched captive through the roof of the car. The fire service, however, on hearing that Lord Louis' penthouse was involved, had improved the occasion by turning out an imposing array of men and equipment.

Upstairs the only lighting fixtures as yet installed were those in Lord Louis' two rooms. The rest of the floor was in total darkness, in which about thirty firemen were prowling around, with their miners'

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lamps strapped on their belts, waiting for the "expert" to admit defeat so they could start on their destructive "errand of mercy". Finally, at twenty minutes past eleven, a seventeen-year-old boy with a mechanical turn of mind, son of a foreman in a lift plant, asked if he might twiddle certain levers which had been exposed after the firemen had begun to batter down the lift doors. The "expert" pooh-poohed the suggestion, but finally condescended to let him do as he wished. Immediately there was a whirr of taut cables over drums, the lift glided safely down to the ground floor, the automatic doors opened, and a pale and perspiring man staggered out, asking if he might have a strong whiskey-and-soda.

Some weeks after this event, when Lord and Lady Louis were both fully established in the penthouse, Queen Mary expressed a desire to see it, and was invited to tea. At the proper time Lord Louis went down to the ground floor to wait for the Queen in the hall, while Lady Louis waited at the lift doors near the reception-rooms on the seventh floor.

The Queen, when shown into the lift on her arrival, said: "I've heard terrible stories of this lift. I'm rather frightened to go up in it."

"Oh, it is operating wonderfully now. It is absolutely safe," said Lord Louis confidently. "As a matter of fact, now it really *is* foolproof."

This ingenious machine was so designed that it would obey any number of instructions given in the order in which the relevant buttons had been pressed. By mischance Mrs. Cosden's secretary, who had been inspecting some work not yet finished on the eighth floor, had no idea that the royal visitor was expected. She pressed first the button to summon the lift to the eighth floor and then the button to return it to the ground floor, with the result that Queen Mary, accompanied by Lord Louis, was whizzed up to the eighth floor, where the doors flew open to reveal for an instant a forest of ladders and an ocean of paint, together with Mrs. Cosden's secretary, then quickly closed again on the startled sovereign, who was at once whirled down to the ground floor.

While Lady Louis was waiting nervously on the seventh floor, unaware of what was going on, the Queen was somewhat puzzled at being rattled up and down instead of being ushered into Lady Louis' drawing-room. She met the situation bravely and, after a second attempt, was deposited safe and sound on the seventh floor, where she was received by Lady Louis according to plan.

Lord Louis' interest in gadgets and devices was only an overflow from his professional pursuits and ran apart from the main stream of energy which he directed towards the one activity he really took entirely serious: his career in the Navy. He had decided to specialize in the study of wireless and signals in the beginning not only because it appealed to

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the mechanical side of his mind, but because he believed that it was possibly the most undeveloped branch of study in the Navy. True, there was the Naval Air Arm, but this would never be developed so long as a Cabinet, not frightened by the prospect of war, watched Service appropriations in the same spirit as a man might watch his possessions being dispersed at a bankruptcy sale.

During his Long Signals course in Portsmouth Lord Louis learned not only the broader theory of communications but also the functional side. He was capable of transmitting messages in Morse code as well as any petty officer who had been at it for fifteen years, sending twenty-five words per minute, though it is necessary to send only twenty-one to qualify as an Assistant Fleet Wireless Officer. In this sort of study he had graduated, as has already been said, at the top of his class, which is interesting in the light of his earlier lack of particular academic distinction. He was described by his commanding officer while going through the school as being "clever and zealous and having worked hard while taking the course".

After graduating from the "Dagger Course" at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich, a specialized course that goes deeply into the theory of radio and electronics, he was appointed assistant wireless and telegraphy officer on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean. One of his duties was to introduce the young midshipmen on the Fleet Flagship to the mysteries of wireless telegraphy, and it was this job that led to his writing his first book since the adventures of "Rob and Bob". It was, according to him, a "child's guide to wireless telegraphy". According to his own explanation, he wrote it because, while lecturing, he

"became so exasperated with his class, who persisted in making copious notes on his anti-penultimate remarks, thereby missing the current explanation, that he banished note-books from the class-room after the first lecture. In fairness to the class he had to provide some substitute for notes, so he rewrote his own, 'had them hectographed' and lent copies to the class after each lecture from which they could prepare note-books during the afternoon".

The notes were a great success and met the need for a publication, which would cover briefly and simply both the theory and practice of the wireless telegraphy branch in the Navy, for those who had had practically no preliminary instruction in that field.

In 1929 he had fully qualified as a wireless specialist of sufficient experience to be placed in charge of all instruction and examinations at the Royal Naval Signals School at Portsmouth. This entailed giving

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lectures to the lieutenants who were taking the Long Signals course, and supervising the instruction of everybody in the school down to the ratings qualifying to be radio telegraphists.

While lecturing he spoke rapidly and with great clarity, frequently illustrating his lecture with drawings on the blackboard. When not demonstrating he would keep his hands occupied rotating a heavy gold signet ring which he always wore on the little finger of his left hand, as is the custom in England. Part of his fascination lay in the great pleasure he seemed to take in giving the lectures. An officer told me, when he was a midshipman, Lord Louis gave his class a lecture on how a radio transmitter works. He did this by demonstrating with a model, which he had had built out of glass tubing, and, to illustrate which way the current went, he poured various coloured inks through the tubes. The same informant told me that Mountbatten seemed to have more and more fun pouring ink through the various tubes as he progressed, incidentally covering himself with the fluid in the process. His enthusiasm communicated itself to his audience, who left the class-room having had their attention held throughout the lecture and having learned something real about radio, instead of being bored to distraction. By his enthusiasm Lord Louis had transformed a piece of radio equipment from a dull mechanical device into a fascinating and awe-inspiring toy.

Although he actually instructed only officers, he examined all the leading telegraphists and petty officers who passed through the school in wave-changing, sending, transmitting and receiving. He was very much admired and respected by these men. One petty officer whom he had examined said, "The reason we admired him so much was because we were never able to put anything over on him."

The senior officer in charge of the school said that he was especially remarkable for his "aptitude in imparting technical knowledge". At this, his common sense, energy, and mechanical ability showed themselves to great advantage. Of all the innovations he introduced while instructing at the school, possibly the most important was the compilation of a book which included a description of the detailed operation of every type of radio transmitter and receiver, from the kind installed in the most insignificant trawler to that in the largest battleships. It was in loose-leaf form so it could be added to, changed, and brought up to date, as old equipment and parts became obsolete and were removed. This was a valuable contribution, for hitherto every type of transmitter and receiver had been accompanied by its own pamphlet, giving the details and specifications of that model only, so the men at sea in a certain type of craft had the opportunity to learn only about the particular style of set installed on his own ship. Lord Louis' book gave the wireless operator, especially on smaller craft, the opportunity to familiarize himself with



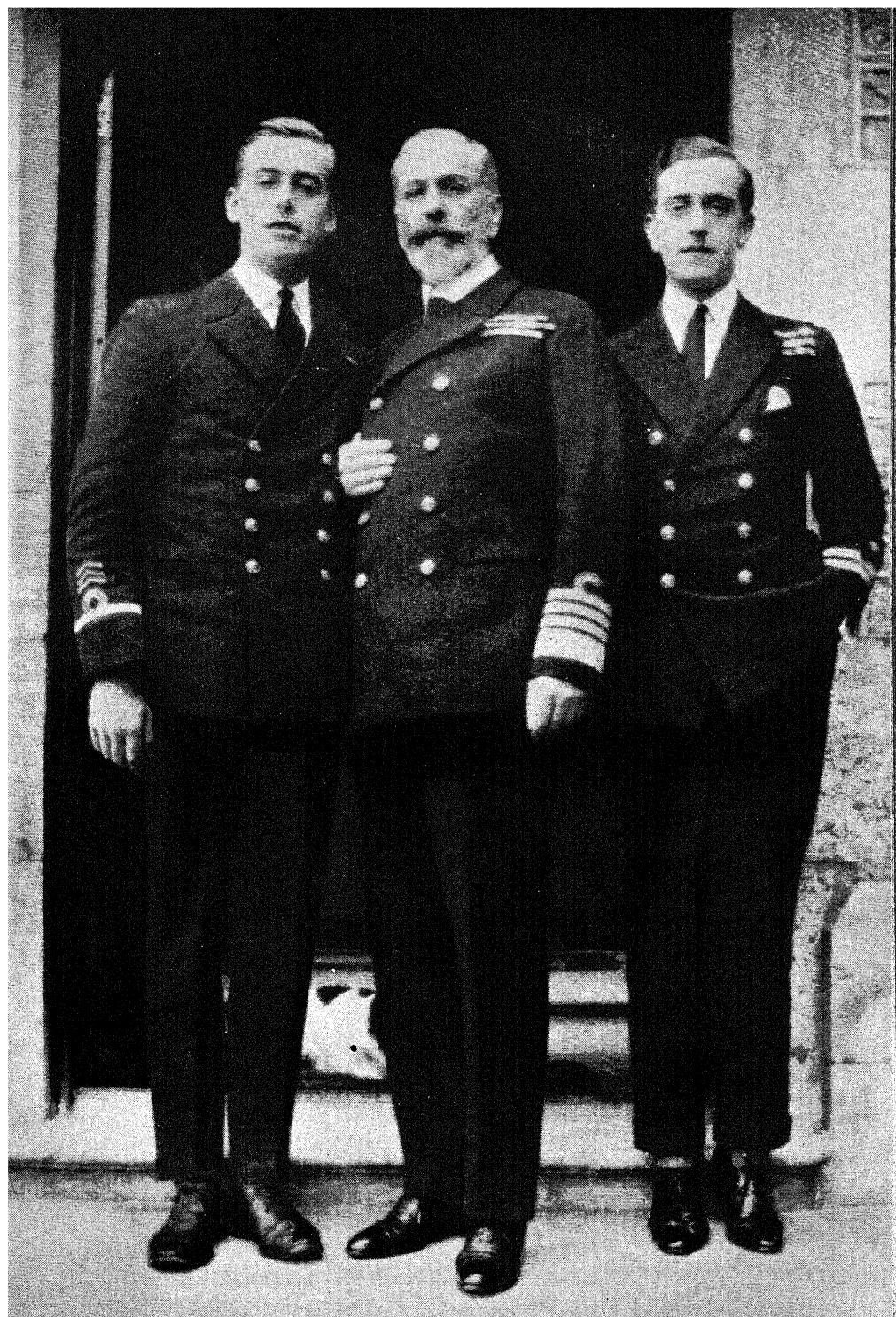
every type of set in use in the Navy, so that he became qualified to enter the wireless school and to be promoted.

If the loose-leaf feature of the book was an innovation in itself, Lord Louis also did much to improve, clarify and simplify the presentation of the material. He made drawings for the book himself, using various coloured inks instead of the uniform black which had always been used in making technical diagrams hitherto. High-voltage wires were drawn in red, audio-frequency circuits in brown, and so forth. This made the diagram of a complicated piece of equipment much easier to understand. Each section of a drawing was also numbered in reference to the page opposite where the problem was analysed. For instance, when a condenser was mentioned there would be, in brackets, the number "2", so that one could easily refer back to the drawing and identify the condenser under discussion. He also applied the methods used in the book to teaching in the school. Under his direction a draughting staff was established to prepare instructional charts in different coloured inks for him to refer to in his lectures.

Not content with merely numbering the diagrams in text-books, he also thought to number the various transmitting and receiving sets, which were available at the school, with ivory discs. In that way a student could go down and examine a set, whether for a battleship or for a shore installation, find out where the component parts were on the actual equipment in question, and clearly and easily relate them to the diagrams.

In the summer of 1931 Lord Louis was appointed Chief Wireless Officer of the Mediterranean Fleet and went out again to Malta in the Fleet Flagship with Admiral Sir W. W. Fisher, who was then Commander-in-Chief of that Fleet. Here he was as tireless as he had been at Signals School. While sailing between Portsmouth and Gibraltar he numbered every part of the vast and complex radio equipment aboard the vessel.

In Malta he divided his time between his office aboard the Fleet Flagship and his office in the Castile, an old circular building which served as Staff Headquarters and shore centre for Fleet communications. Scarcely had the "Casa Medina" been opened and aired than he began organizing a Signals School there for the Fleet. This he called the Signals Training Centre and arranged to have officers give regular classes for the Fleet operators. Although attendance was voluntary, the number who actually did attend the lectures was amazingly high, an indication of how far he had been able to inspire the wireless operators of the Fleet with an interest and pride in their work. While not actually engaged in his duties as Fleet Wireless Officer, he kept busy with the school and with modifying his manual as new wireless equipment came into use.





[Topical Press

Starting of Combined Operations.  
Wedding of Lord Louis Mountbatten and Miss Edwina Ashley

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While at Malta he also kept the Fleet telegraphists on their toes by incessant practice and exercises. He kept an undulator tuned constantly to the various frequencies used by the Fleet, thus intercepting all Morse messages that were sent out. He would analyse the strips that came off the machine at regular intervals and, when necessary, send a personal letter to the telegraphist who had sent a given message, commenting on whatever faults he might find in his Morse transmission. Since such letters were always of a personal nature, he would never take any disciplinary action. He would also allow a limited number of operators to come ashore daily to make their own undulator tapes on the machines in the Castile. At the same time he had one of four special telegraphists of his staff always listening-in on the Fleet communications band, so that wireless silence could be tightened up. By these methods he raised the discipline of the Fleet operators to a very much higher pitch than it had ever attained before. Indeed, he was able to get all the ships of three flotillas of eight destroyers, totalling twenty-seven, including the leaders, to acknowledge a message within sixty seconds. This entailed that ships answer in alphabetic sequence with their two-letter "call-sign" and with the letter "R" (the international call-sign for "message received").

During peace years wireless silence is unimportant, and is too apt to be forgotten, though it is valuable in establishing good habits for war-time, when a breach of wireless silence may disclose to the enemy the whereabouts of a whole fleet.

One year, during the summer Fleet cruises, when it is customary for the officers' wives to leave Malta, Lady Louis went yachting with a number of her friends. Lord Louis had stayed behind and was supervising Fleet communications from the Castile. When the yacht was nearing the harbour of Copenhagen Lady Louis received a telegram on board from one of her old friends, then in Denmark's capital, which said: "Delighted to hear you arrive today. Do dine with me tomorrow night. Love. Allie." Exactly at the moment when this radiogram was travelling through the ether Lord Louis happened to be standing on top of the radio-control tower watching the signal operators take down messages, which they monitored at random on various frequencies from ships in every part of the world. He was looking over the shoulder of one of them and saw him taking down the words of Lady Louis' message.

Immediately he sent another to Lady Louis aboard the yacht, saying: "You should not marry a wireless officer. Also love from Dickie." Lady Louis received this one while still sitting in a deck-chair drafting an answer to the previous radiogram.

Lord Louis also had special exercises in action coding. This meant that he would transmit a message in some simple code from the Castile to the whole Fleet, and the telegraphist on each ship had to decode the

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message while some officer noted how long it took him to do so. The ship which could decode fastest was awarded a diploma, while special practice was arranged for the crews which were slowest. Enormous prestige became attached to these tests by the lower deck and the subject of which ship was to be awarded a certificate of merit was discussed even in bars ashore, in much the same way as the winning of the inter-flotilla rugby trophy.

While he was Fleet Wireless Officer Lord Louis was also responsible for raising the pay of radio operators. He had an opportunity to present the case of the communications branch when a committee convened in London, under Admiral Larken, was charged with investigating conditions in the Navy. At the time a radio operator was not as well paid as a qualified gunner, although his duties were more specialized and required longer training, especially as they grew in importance and complexity as new equipment and short wave came into use. Mountbatten pointed this out to the committee in justification for his recommendation that the radio-communications branch be reorganized to include more highly paid ratings. In the system he recommended an operator could, according to his proficiency, be classified a wireless telegraphist first, second and third class. With this system in effect, there was now a place in a ship's establishment for a leading telegraphist and a petty-officer telegraphist. His system caused a pay increase of as much as thirty per cent. for a leading telegraphist. This did not impair his popularity with the lower deck.

Lord Louis well realized the growing importance and complexity of the technical side of radio and presented this aspect also to the Larken committee, with the recommendation that there should be a new branch that would concentrate solely on radio repair. Because the tide of economy was then at its flood, his plan was not adopted and remained forgotten until 1939, when its wisdom was recognized and it was put into effect too late.

If Lord Louis' zeal for communications was responsible to a great extent for the remarkable improvements he made in that branch of the Service, much of his success was due to his tact. When he first arrived in Malta he visited all the ships in the Fleet. In each of the hundred or so, he startled the Chief Petty-Officer Telegrapher by greeting him in some such words as: "Good morning, Mr. Harris! You've lost Jones recently, haven't you? Good man, Jones, but a little weak on ciphering. Oh, by the way, have you been having any more difficulty with that amplifier?" Naturally, the signals crew would be amazed by this uncanny display of knowledge and by the fact that he seemed to take enough interest in that particular ship to know what was going on aboard. The secret of it was that he had had a card index prepared, and kept up to date by his staff,

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in which there was a card for every ship in the Fleet where all irregularities, breakdowns, or faults, and any staff changes in the wireless department of each ship, were noted. In the launch, on his way out to inspect any unit of the Fleet, he would study the card applying to it.

Though, as can easily be imagined, he worked his staff almost as hard as himself, they did not object as much as might be imagined. Office jokes about him, such as that they should send him back to Britain to solve the unemployment problem, were good-natured.

When he was preparing the revised edition of his signals manual he wanted to find out the length of the binder screws necessary to hold 260 loose-leaf pages of foolscap, so he had to measure the thickness of such a pile. A young rating assigned to the job resented it because he thought it was below his dignity. Noting his silent disapproval, Lord Louis called him in and said, "Get me a pair of scissors and a whack of foolscap." He then proceeded to cut the requisite number of pages and measure them himself, very much to the young man's astonishment. Lord Louis also used to apply on all occasions the old naval maxim that if one is going to punish or praise a man, one must do so as soon as possible after the act for which he is to be either punished or praised has been performed. Sometimes, when marking the frequent competitive examinations he called for, he would forgo dinner and work long after midnight, so the results could be posted the morning after the tests were given. The light in his cabin office aboard the *Queen Elizabeth* was generally seen burning until late at night, as he sat working in shirt, shorts and slippers, while the other officers not on duty were ashore enjoying themselves.

Before Lord Louis was transferred from Malta he decided to make a demonstration which would give publicity to the wireless communications branch of the Navy, and also impress on the senior officers an idea of its fundamental importance. The demonstration, designed to illustrate how Fleet communications in the Mediterranean actually worked, was staged in the big lecture-room in the Castile, and every officer from the Commander-in-Chief down was invited to attend. Senior officers were invited the first day, junior officers the second, while midshipmen and petty officers were asked to attend the dress rehearsal. Each day the hall was crowded to capacity.

For this occasion he remote-controlled, from switchboards on the platform in the lecture-room, the high-powered transmitters from the naval station in Rinella and all the receivers on the roof of the Castile. He divided the show into three parts, the first dealing with peace-time communications, the second with the tightening of wireless discipline, and the last with communications during a naval action. Even the Admiralty in London took part.

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The switchboard and the operators were placed on the stage during the performance, in full view of the audience, while the Morse code was received over a loudspeaker and was written down, as it came in, on a large blackboard.

The demonstration opened as Lord Louis, stepping down among the audience, asked the Commander-in-Chief to originate a message to the Admiralty. This was coded and sent by operators on the stage. A few minutes later the loudspeaker blared the answer as it came in from the Admiralty, and the audience was amazed at the rapidity with which it came through. This experiment was to a certain extent a trick, for Lord Louis had alerted his opposite number in the Admiralty as to when the message was going to come through, and asked him to run back the reply as fast as possible. Nevertheless, it produced the desired effect.

The next item on the programme was a demonstration of how it was possible to detect the identity of any culprits who broke wireless discipline. Lord Louis explained that each transmitter had a different pitch, and to make doubly sure that this should be obvious during the demonstration he arranged that the *Royal Oak* should adjust its note to be much shriller than that of any other ship in the Fleet. After explaining the importance of complete radio silence, and how easy it is to detect the culprit who breaks it, he had the loudspeaker in the hall blare forth an illegal message. Lord Louis immediately had all ships in the Fleet ordered to send their radio call-signs. As all the ships answered alphabetically, the pitch of the *Royal Oak's* transmitter could be distinguished even by an amateur. The audience, finding themselves able to recognize it, were delighted.

The culmination of the programme was a demonstration of the part played by communications in a Fleet action. For this purpose Lord Louis had arranged for a 'plane to fly round the island and for a couple of submarines to lie outside the harbour. He prefaced the demonstration by saying he proposed to show that if, in a Fleet action, the wireless operator is ignored when things were going well, he is none the less in a position of responsibility equal to that of any first lieutenant.

He had just finished speaking when a report flashed from the circling aircraft that an enemy fleet had been sighted. This called for doubling the watch of radio men. Lord Louis then pressed a buzzer and at this signal a dozen men burst through the doors at the opposite end of the hall, dashed on to the stage, and manned extra transmitters and receivers, tuning in on various frequencies. Now that the Fleet had been sighted, continuous reports streamed in as to the speed, disposition, and course of the enemy, from the submarine and then from the cruiser, while Lord Louis gave a running account of the progress of the action. Meanwhile, behind a partition at the back of the stage, the messages were being



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duplicated as they arrived and distributed to the audience, very much as they would be to the Admiral's staff aboard a flagship.

To show the part played by the signalmen on board the leader of a destroyer flotilla Lord Louis had had a platform constructed in imitation of a bridge, cleverly arranged so that it would rock realistically. On it stood a man, dressed for dirty weather, who added to the excitement by receiving orders from the captain and transmitting them to the imaginary flotilla of destroyers.

The demonstration was a brilliant success, and did a great deal to attract the attention of senior officers to the part played by communications in Fleet organization as well as to bring this branch into well-deserved prominence.

When Lord Louis arrived at his post as Fleet Wireless Officer in the Mediterranean the Navy used only Morse for radio transmission. He was speech-minded, however, and was responsible for installing voice transmitters in all the larger units of the Fleet so that radio programmes could be heard round the ships. Actually, the first time a radio message was broadcast to the Fleet by voice was when the First Lord of the Admiralty visited them and Lord Louis asked him to come up to his office to say a few words. The second was on the occasion of the King's Christmas Day speech inaugurating the B.B.C. Empire Service. For this broadcast Lord Louis set up receivers in the naval hospital, in the local motion-picture houses, in the shops, in the streets, and in public squares, so that it was heard by most of the local population as well as by nearly every sailor in the Fleet.

Indeed, the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean Fleet, Admiral Sir W. W. Fisher, was so pleased with Lord Louis' success on this occasion that he sent a special memorandum to the Secretary of the Admiralty explaining how Lord Louis had overcome the "fading" that usually marred radio reception from England. "His keenness and enthusiasm were such as to sweep aside all difficulties," reported Admiral Fisher.

On another occasion Lord Louis became a sports announcer during the annual Fleet regatta at Corfu. Such events as this are great occasions, and the participants practise weeks in advance. Among the main features of this regatta are the inter-departmental (petty officers, officers, stokers, and inter-ship races with whalers, cutters, and even dinghies. On the great day the principal ships of the Fleet anchor in two long rows on either side of the course the races are to follow, while the flagship anchors at the end, opposite the finishing-line. The smaller vessels take position on either side behind the larger. Their companies crowd forward on the deck to see if they can catch a glimpse of the race, or to be the first to cheer or growl as a signal hoisted on the flagship announces the result of



each race. After Lord Louis had installed voice receivers and loudspeakers on every ship in the Fleet, he decided it would add much to the occasion if he commented on the races while they were in progress. This he did from a small launch which he had had fitted out with a radio transmitter operating on batteries, so that ships not actually on the edge of the course could get a better idea of how the contest was progressing.

While the boats were assembling for the next race, Lord Louis had a musical interlude played. That evening Admiral Fisher said to him, "Dickie, the B.B.C. is certainly the loser in not having you on their staff as a sports commentator." The Fleet, it is said, were of much the same opinion.

When Lord Louis left his post as Fleet Wireless Officer in the Mediterranean he became no less diligent in his efforts to improve or alter everything with which he came in contact. His desire for improvement had been limited not merely to wireless telegraphy; he had devoted his energies also to getting better motion-picture equipment for the ships on the station. In 1931 only the larger ships had cinema projectors, and even these had no sound equipment, but by then talkies had been perfected technically and Al Jolson's picture *The Singing Fool* was internationally the rage.

One of the ships in the Mediterranean Fleet, having decided it would be worth while to find out if its projector could be adapted for sound film, wrote to one of the larger companies in England that manufactured motion-picture equipment to ask how much it would cost to have a sound adaptor installed. The reply stated that with amplifiers, audio-frequency devices, sound-heads, and loudspeakers, the cost would be approximately £400. When Lord Louis heard this he said the price was too high, so he set about designing special amplifying and sound-reproducing devices which, if assembled from parts by the ships' technicians, could be installed for £85. He also went to the Fleet repair ship, H.M.S. *Resource*, and arranged to have a sound-head made for the projectors, as this was one of the most complicated and expensive parts of the equipment. He then prepared and issued a publication in which he told how to convert the projectors and build the amplifiers, so that even ships miles from any large base could do so, and also how to order the necessary parts from manufacturers. This he circulated throughout the Fleet. It was so popular and received such immediate attention that requests for copies came pouring into his office from ships even so far away as the China Station.

To the ships stationed in Malta he went so far as to give special technical assistance in building and installing sound equipment, and, when ready, arranged to have men trained to operate it as well. His fame as a motion-picture sound expert soon spread through Malta's tiny capital, Valetta, and often, when newly converted projectors in public cinemas

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broke down, Lord Louis, summoned by telephone from the "Casa Medina", would be called on to assist in repairing.

Five years later, when he was stationed in London, he did not forget how much pleasure these projectors had given the Fleet, so he began lobbying for an organization to supply new films to the Navy simultaneously with their appearance in fashionable West End theatres. Up to that time the only films that had been available aboard ship were patched, scratched, and antiquated productions, usually passed on to the Navy when they were so far gone in decay that distributors could not palm them off elsewhere.

The result of his efforts was a body known as the Royal Naval Film Corporation, which during the seven years of its existence has shown over twelve hundred different films in naval ships. He launched the idea of the corporation at a dinner given one evening in his penthouse, to which he invited all the members of the Board of Admiralty and all the managers of the leading film corporations. The Duke of Kent, who was present, offered to act as patron of the new venture. The remaining guests were suitably impressed by the others' presence, and with the support of the film distributors and the Board of Admiralty, who were appointed governors, the corporation was founded. Thus His Majesty's seadogs were supplied with the latest films and gramophone records, all at a price they could afford, and were glad to pay, while the Government met the expense of installing good projectors in the ships for the avowed purpose of showing instructional films.

Some idea of the corporation's efficiency during the war can be got from the fact that a film, which opened in London on Monday, was frequently shown on Thursday of the same week in some such place as Colombo, half-way round the world. Neither the Army nor the Air Force had a similar organization in existence before the war. As a result they never got their film distribution system in satisfactory operation. At one point the dearth of films became so serious on the Burma Front, while Lord Louis was Supreme Allied Commander, that he arranged to have Commander Sir Arthur Jarret, one of the film distributors who helped him found the corporation, pay a special visit to this theatre of operations to see what could be done to remedy the situation.

To round off his training as a naval officer he next took two interpreters' courses, one in French and one in German. Parenthetically, this entailed spending four months in Paris and four in Germany. His method of learning French was characteristic. Over and above studying hard with the best teacher available he insisted in speaking French at all times. Lady Louis, who spoke French fluently, found her husband's perpetual inquiries into every word he did not understand a little exhausting. Although his accent, both in French and in German, remains atrocious,

his diligence was rewarded by a very high standing in his examinations. The result of his acquiring these languages, so far as the Navy was concerned, was the compilation of two dictionaries, one of French and one of German naval terms, that are still standard works in the Service today.

Lord Louis was then assigned to his first sea command, that of the destroyer *Daring*. Even then his passion for improvement continued to burn. One day, in a French battleship, he saw a device on the bridge designed to compute automatically the results of the complicated calculations required in the most difficult type of naval manoeuvre: distance keeping. He remarked to a friend of his at the time, "That's an excellent idea." Destroyers travel like wolves, in a pack; but, unlike wolves, they must remain constantly a certain specified distance apart. On that alone depends the manoeuvrability of the entire flotilla and, more important, the gunnery concentration. This manoeuvre is especially difficult for destroyers because they move so rapidly, particularly during an action. Up to then the trouble had been that the captain had to concentrate far too much of his attention on "station keeping" while at the same time trying to fight his ship.

Lord Louis designed a device which enabled the officer on the bridge to regain the correct distance of his ship from the one ahead of him by merely turning a pointer on a dial to the number of yards he needed to move forwards or backwards. Another dial in the engine-room would automatically register how many engine revolutions were needed to regain correct distance. As the ship came into position the pointer on the engine-room dial would swing to zero. When it reached there, the engineer would again adjust his engines to the speed of the Fleet. While the principle of the device was almost as old as the axle, it had not been applied in this particular way before. Lord Louis called his invention a "distance corrector", but it was not long before he added to it a "line of bearing keeper", the purpose of which was to compute at what rate of revolution and how many revolutions it was necessary to go forward in such complicated manoeuvres as quarter-line ahead.

The response of naval officers to this device was generally institutional. They were apt to treat it as "Dickie Mountbatten's toy", and seemed rather injured when he kept station with it successfully in his own destroyer, as though they thought he might have been cheating.

It was finally accepted by the Admiralty and installed in "J" and "K" class destroyers, but it was still looked on with suspicion. Commander Butler-Bowden, Lord Louis' flotilla navigational officer, told me that once, when he was talking to some brother officers about an action in which Lord Louis' flotilla had participated at night and had maintained station at one-and-a-half cables, somebody said, "I don't see how the line was kept if you were keeping station at three cables."

"But we were not keeping station at three cables, we were keeping station at one-and-a-half cables," Butler-Bowden repeated.

"That's impossible at night."

"Not when using Mountbatten's station-keeping device," Butler-Bowden answered, but he elicited only a murmur of disbelief from his audience.

While Lord Louis was in destroyers he also invented an "improved navigational ruler". When he had his idea patented it was reported in the papers with the following comment:

"This is not the first navigational ruler that Lord Louis Mountbatten has made; most naval cadets in their engineering shipwork make one out of brass. Ships' courses, plotted by midshipmen armed with these offensive weapons, have been known to be hundreds of miles out."

In making these inventions Lord Louis would always lure his friends into doing some part of the work. In 1937 one of these, who had been living for some years in France and was bilingual, received a telegram from Lord Louis asking him to go to a certain address in Paris to obtain samples of fluorescent plexiglass "as shown at the Villa Coublay Air Force Exhibition. Do not divulge your nationality," the telegram continued, "or that they are for use in England. Pay any price within reason and dispatch registered to 'Brook House'. Signed, 'Dickie'."

The friend was somewhat startled. He could only imagine that he was being asked to undertake some peculiarly secret sort of international spying and was a good deal disturbed at being compromised by a telegram sent through the French postal service, so decided to take no steps in the matter. What was more, he studiously avoided the quarter of Paris to which he had been told to go to discharge his mysterious errand.

On going to England some weeks later he visited Lord Louis and said: "You must have taken leave of your senses to embroil me in something of this kind. I don't know what you are up to, and am not asking for any explanations, but I take a very dim view, as an Englishman living in France, of being placed in such an equivocal position."

"I never heard of such nonsense," said Lord Louis. "I saw some of this new plexiglass at the French Air Force Exhibition and thought it would add greatly to the appearance of my new station keeper, a model of which I am about to submit to the Admiralty. I tried to buy some at the address I put in the telegram, but when they found out that I was going to take it to England they refused to accept my order, as they had sold the rights of British distribution to Imperial Chemicals. When I went to Imperial Chemicals here to try to get some, they said they would not be

putting it into production for another four months, which was of course too late for me. So I wired asking you to get some, knowing that, if you let them know you were English and that it was coming to England, they would give you the same reply as they gave me."

This incident was characteristic of Lord Louis' way of using people, asking them to carry out special missions for him, often by a cable of a mysterious nature, and then becoming irritated when they do not act blindly on his instructions. Such requests, however, never concern his personal interests, but always one of the many activities in which he is engaged. As these are of a quasi-national, or at any rate of a public, nature, he assumes that his friends must put themselves to any amount of trouble to help him. As a matter of fact they do, and although they complain bitterly at his making use of them as if they were permanently at his disposal, he is so contrite and disarming when they tackle him about it that they are quite likely to find themselves saddled with another thankless task before they have finished complaining about the last one.

During these years Lady Louis divided her time between her family duties, organizing charity balls, and taking trips usually to wild and remote parts of the world. One year she visited South America, another she went to some of the more secluded parts of Persia, yet another to South Africa, and once as far afield as Borneo and Sumatra.

In 1939 she decided she would visit the East again and make the dangerous journey up the newly opened Burma Road to China. She arrived in Rangoon, where she met a Chinese family who were to make the journey in a light Army lorry and offered to give her and her party a lift. She accepted the offer and spent two weeks following a convoy of ammunition lorries over the narrow and precarious road. Before returning to England she flew to Dutch New Guinea and took a trip round the Spice Islands in a junk.

One of the characteristics of her way of travelling was that she always moved with as few impedimenta as possible. On these trips her first purpose was to escape the dressy formality that marked her life in London and Malta. One of her friends told me that she rarely travelled with more than an extra dress, a scarf, a toothbrush, a comb and a compact. On one occasion, when her family had seen her off on a trip to Mexico with certainly little more than this, they were amused to read shortly thereafter a dispatch in a London paper, date-lined Mexico City, under the headline, "Lady Louis Mounbatten arrives with no less than fifty-six trunks". From then on it was a family joke to describe Lady Louis' light travelling equipment of, say, two suitcases as "her fifty-six trunks".

The only souvenirs she ever brought back from these excursions were animals, which she usually named after the region where she had bought them. From Africa she returned with a lion called Sabi, after the river of

that name. Sabi was soon in considerable disfavour with Lord Louis because of his predilection for playing in the sand bunkers of the golf course at "Adsdean", as well as once eating up the golf clubs of their neighbour Lord Duncannon. From her trip to the East, in 1939, she brought back two baby wallabies, purchased in the Spice Islands, and named them Babo and Bobo after the particular islands from which they came. They first presented quite a problem to Lady Louis. When she asked the natives what these creatures ate she was told their diet was quite simple, they ate only orchids. She had horrid visions of them eating orchids in England, but soon found they thrived on a diet of bread and milk.

One might wonder what Lord Louis did for relaxation during the 'twenties and the 'thirties, in the periods between overworking his staff and himself. It is characteristic of him that he expended as much energy on his relaxation as on his naval career. For example, about 1925 he started to play polo, having tried golf and found it a dull game. The reasons announced for the choice of a game not usually associated with naval officers were quite contradictory. It has been claimed that he took up polo because it was the best way of exercising in Malta and also because his father was an adept at the game. Neither of these reasons seems adequate. Some of his closer friends seem to agree that he took up the game because he found it the best outlet for his propensity to organize, to train, and to impose his will on others. Whatever the reasons may have been that made Lord Louis decide to excel in this particular pastime, aptitude was not one of them. He did not have what is known as a natural eye for the ball (witness his youthful inability to play either cricket or rugby), nor was he a particularly good horseman. "When Dickie started riding polo ponies he looked like a sack of potatoes tied to the saddle," a friend of his told me.

But he was not one to be discouraged by his natural disabilities. "If anything comes to you naturally," he said, "chuck the rule book out of the window. However, if you have no natural aptitude you can do almost as well in the long run by approaching it from a scientific point of view, diligently observing all the rules." Unfortunately, polo had always been too specialized and exclusive a game for anybody to write a primer on how to play it. Nobody had ever described how to wield a mallet or to sit a pony when executing certain strokes. Attention had centred rather on the strategy of the field or the care of ponies. Lord Louis decided he must learn the fundamentals of the game and that the only way to learn them was at first hand. This meant watching polo played, and cross-examining whatever players he knew. He soon discovered, however, that even such internationally known players as Mr. Winston Guest and Lord Wodehouse had always played "by the light of nature" and could

not tell him what they did when making a certain kind of shot because they had never bothered to analyse their strokes for themselves.

As he could get no other explanation, Lord Louis sought the answers to his questions in slow-motion pictures of such strokes as the off-side forehander, the off-side backhander, the near-side forehander, etc., executed by experts. After studying these he would draw elaborate diagrams of the strokes involved and practise them every afternoon on the lawn at "Adsdean", seated on a wooden horse which he named Winston. Most of the staff, and as many members of his family as he could cajole into it, had to stand like outfielders on various parts of the lawn and throw the balls back to him. Later he had a polo pit constructed in which his wooden horse was placed in the centre of four sloping walls of chicken wire. This pit was covered with a roof and artificially lighted so he could practise hitting the ball again and again for the hour he allotted to this exercise, without having to worry about daylight or good weather. In these early stages he also took exercises to supple himself or to strengthen his fingers by carrying a squash ball around in his pocket, which he squeezed at odd moments. He also tried to strengthen the muscles in his wrist by having a polo stick cut down and weighted on the end with lead, which he would swing whenever he had an opportunity.

By the time he went to Malta he had become, by dint of practice, an expert horseman and had developed considerable dexterity with the polo mallet, but he had still to learn the most difficult aspect of any game: team play. With this in view he got together a team of young officers who were interested in acquiring a knowledge of the game, and practised daily on the windy Marsa polo ground. To indoctrinate these new players, and any others who might become interested in the mysteries of team tactics, Lord Louis wrote a pamphlet on the subject which he entitled "Organization M". He concluded this hectographed booklet on a philosophic note: "When knocking about always aim in a definite direction. Hitting aimlessly may be amusing but it is a very bad habit."

Finally he organized the team which was to become famous as the "Bluejackets". It was made up of Lieutenant E. G. Haywood-Lonsdale, No. 1; Captain D. A. B. Neville, of the Royal Marines, No. 2; Mountbatten, No. 3 and captain; and Lieutenant-Commander C. E. Lambe, back.

Before this he had been responsible for the organization of the Royal Naval Polo Association, which was to finance the founding of polo clubs at naval stations from Portsmouth to China. The method he employed was very like that used to start the Royal Naval Film Corporation, which he was to found eight years later. The King became patron, the three princes became associate patrons, and Lord Louis himself took the executive position of honorary secretary and treasurer. The Association

## THE PRACTICAL PLAYBOY

was highly successful and many retired officers paid their yearly membership dues in order to make it financially possible for younger officers to play polo.

The success encountered by Lord Louis and his team-mates was enough to inspire the entire Navy. For months he practised with them every afternoon. After practice they would return to the long drawing-room in the "Casa Medina" and there discuss as many situations as they could remember, reconstructing plays and making them more intelligible with matchsticks on the billiard table. Only after they had held a prolonged inquest over the corpse of the game would Lord Louis permit anyone to change his clothes. As a result of this group-training each player knew perfectly the faults and virtues of his team-mates, so they were able as a team to make a considerably better showing than they could have made without this knowledge.

Their most spectacular match was played in 1931 against the 17/21st Lancers, a British regiment, whose team had won the Inter-Regimental Polo Trophy every year since 1918. Lord Louis was determined to defeat these opponents, although they carried the enormous handicap of thirteen goals and were considered unbeatable. His team, the "Bluejackets", actually did win, with thirteen goals in hand, for each side scored seven goals. That year they also won the Duke of York's Cup, awarded by him to the winner of the annual match between the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. This game, witnessed by the Queen, the Duke and Duchess of York, and the King of Spain, was most exciting. Until the beginning of the last chukker the Air Force led by three goals to one. Its team was very strong that year because it included one of the best Army players, temporarily in the R.A.F. However, Lord Louis rallied his team for the last chukker and they managed to win just before the final bell sounded. Only after the match was over was it learned that the ankle of one of the team had been broken during the whole of the last part of the game.

Although the first "Bluejackets" team was broken up shortly after these victories on account of the assignment of its members to different stations, and Lord Louis has not again performed so dramatically on the field, he made two permanent contributions to the game. Characteristically, one took the form of a new head for the polo mallet, designed by him, which he named the Royal Naval Polo Association Head. He described its characteristics in the following terms: "It gives greater lift, since its vertical diameter is less than that of a small diameter head (and this enables it to get well underneath the ball). But it also gives greater strength and drive, since its horizontal diameter is greater than that of a large diameter head (and consequently the bulk has not been sacrificed)." This head became popular amongst polo players on both sides of the Atlantic, and he assigned the royalties, which were considerable, to the



Association funds. Also characteristically, the second contribution was a book entitled *An Introduction to Polo*, under the pseudonym of "Marco". According to the preface by Lord Wodehouse it "contained the most reasoned and progressive introduction to the game I have ever read". Lord Louis wrote it as a guide to the absolute beginner who, aboard ship or stationed in some foreign port, could not have the advantage of getting first-hand advice from players of the skill of Lord Wodehouse or Mr. Winston Guest.

His method of preparing material for the book was interesting. Each week-end he had his team-mates, Haywood-Lonsdale, Neville and Lambe, down to stay with him, as well as an old friend (who knew about a horse only that it kicked) to act as guinea pig. Every afternoon the team assembled around the tea-table and discussed the various points to be brought out in the book. These usually originated with Lord Louis, in the form of casual notes about ideas that occurred to him which he had jotted down during the week. They were discussed at length until all the members of the team were in agreement about them. Then each point was submitted to their non-equestrian friend, who was asked if he, as a layman, could fully understand the point they were making. If he said "no", the form of presentation would be simplified and stripped down until he could. And that was how the book was written. Like the polo mallet-head invented by Lord Louis, the book met with considerable popularity and the royalties were also contributed to the Royal Naval Polo Association.

The *Introduction to Polo* confirms clearly enough the assertion made by the German admiral, Prince Henry of Prussia, who said that "Polo was an extremely good education for young naval officers", for the book is a mine of maxims that would apply equally well to the Navy as to polo. Much of the advice Lord Louis wrote for the benefit of a polo team could just as well apply to the personnel of a ship. For instance, on the behaviour of a captain to his officers after an action: "The captain can better criticize the play of his team by holding a friendly post mortem after the game than by shouting at the team and rattling them when their attention should be on what they are doing." "He should never criticize something that is done, and can't be undone, in the hearing of other people." On the position of a captain at sea: "On the polo ground the captain should be an absolute dictator." On the attitude of a ship's company towards their captain: "The team should have implicit confidence in his (the captain's) decisions." On the duties of a captain: "Never feel that a piece of criticism or advice is too much trouble to give, or that it is too trivial, or that it exceeds your province." "Never feel that the interest you may show in a player, or the praise you may want to give, would not be appreciated." "The morale of your team is of paramount importance." "First of all, insist on punctuality." "If the game

starts going against you, don't let your team go to pieces. Take some definite action. A constructive change of policy will give them more encouragement than simply exhorting them to play up when they probably feel that they are already doing their best." "If you are slightly down, with not much more time to go, it will be well worth while to risk another goal against you in a final desperate assault, and tell your side to take all risks." "Think one or two strokes ahead and take quick decisions; and in polo half the battle is to decide quickly and to anticipate." "Whenever you are doing nothing you are doing wrong." On the handling of a flotilla: "The team that can quickly reorganize itself in defence-formation can afford to take greater risks in attack; and in the same way, it can take greater advantage of having stopped the enemy attack if it is quickly reorganized in attack-formation and makes immediate use of the turn in its fortunes." On tactics: "The primary factor in a successful attack is speed. Generally speaking, if you are the stronger side you will be the attacking side, and it will be to your advantage to speed up the game. When you are the weaker side, however, you may sometimes feel that your advantage will lie in slowing up the game and making it 'choppy'. But it will not do you much good to break up your opponent's attack, if you do not immediately counter-attack in your turn. You should remain attackers even when the ball is travelling in the direction of your own goal, by interfering with and harrying your opponents." "Go hard for your man."

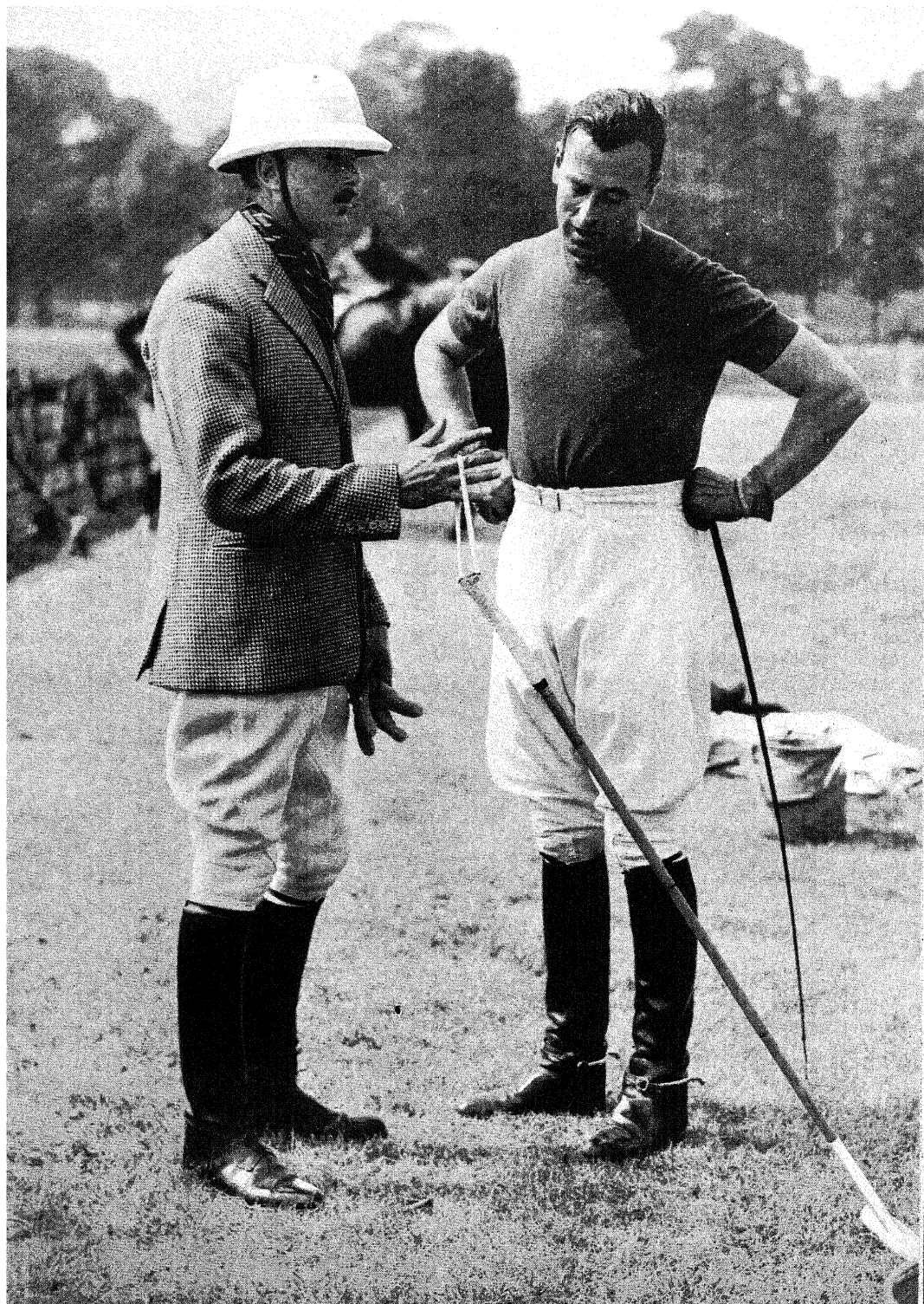
These are but samples picked at random from the advice given in *An Introduction to Polo* which would serve a naval officer equally well on the bridge of a ship or the turf of a polo field. When, in 1934, Lord Louis was given his first sea command as captain of the destroyer *Daring* he had an opportunity to put some of his advice to polo players into naval practice. He went to Chatham to take command of his ship in the summer and was delighted with his new appointment. The flotilla he had joined consisted of the newest and best destroyers of the Royal Navy and he was convinced that his own ship the *Daring* was the finest in the flotilla.

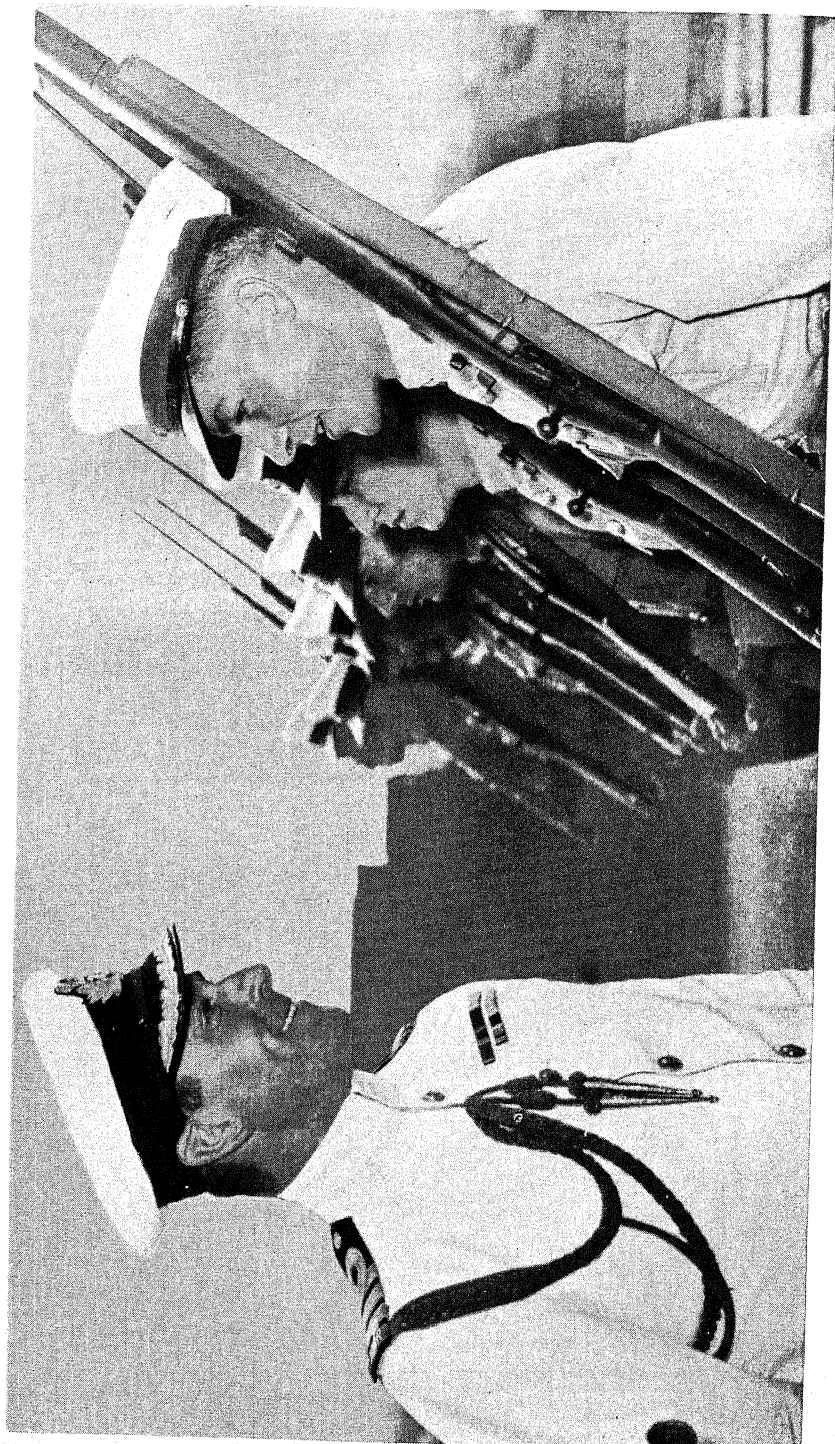
As soon as he took command he had a crane to pick up targets installed on shipboard so that after gunnery practice they could be swung aboard without the usual trouble of launching a boat and without the delay incident to making lines fast to haul them aboard. No sooner had he had this equipment installed and various other changes made than he learned the flotilla was to be assigned the unusual task of steaming out to Singapore, to exchange ships with a destroyer flotilla on the China Station, before joining the Mediterranean Fleet at Malta, where it was finally to be stationed.

However, the news that he might end up in command of a ship in every way inferior to the *Daring* did not shake his determination to make

her the outstanding ship of the Fleet. He began by giving considerable care to the selection of a crew, and no sooner had he got his company together than he made it clear that, although a peace-time commission might be known as a "dead commission", his policy would be based on the saying, "Whenever you are doing nothing you are doing wrong." This policy was put into effect by necessity almost as soon as the ship left the dockyard; for no sooner had the crew arrived aboard than Lord Louis told them that two days hence the Prince of Wales was flying from Windsor to pay her an informal visit. The result was that those first two days were spent in a furious burst of polishing, furbishing, and generally producing order from chaos. Two days after the Prince's visit the *Daring* sailed, in company with the rest of the flotilla, to Gibraltar, on to Malta, through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, across the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, through the Straits of Malacca to Singapore. From the day his ship left the berth at Chatham Lord Louis entered on his programme to win "the implicit confidence of his team". He set about this by asking his first lieutenant, who was his executive, to prepare for him a card index giving the particulars of the one hundred and fifty-nine members of the ship's company. On each card was to be a sailor's name, his duties and some details of his personal life obtained from his divisional officer—as, for example, if he was married, whether he had financial difficulties, the number of his children, and so forth. While shaving every morning Lord Louis would study these cards, and after inspection on Sundays, when the crew fell out he would arrange to have forty men meet him on the quarter-deck. The men would line up, and as they came forward individually to salute him he would greet each one with some such remark as: "Oh yes, Jones, isn't it? You're in the engine-room. I understand you have been having a little difficulty at home recently. I know it is not easy having a mother-in-law to support as well as a wife and two children." He would greet everyone in a similar manner, showing he knew his name, that he was familiar with his job, and that he understood the difficulties of his private life. The effect was magical. According to one of Lord Louis' friends, "after that the ship never looked back".

This method of gaining the confidence of one's men is taught in the Royal Navy because the possession of unexpected knowledge invests the officer with seemingly occult powers. A technique, which is used frequently enough to be described as common practice, is for the officer inspecting the ship's company to walk behind the ranks and turn up the backs of the sailors' collars on which their names are printed. Then, as he passes along the line, he can address these men by name: "Fredericks, your shoes are not polished properly," or "Matthews, your uniform needs pressing." The effect is always surprising.





Inspecting Marines at Norfolk, 1941

The trip to Singapore took a month and a half, and Lord Louis kept himself occupied during his spare time in correcting the proofs of his German and French dictionaries of naval terms, in designing his "improved navigational rules", and in reading. When the flotilla arrived in Singapore it engaged, in all innocence, in "'attack on Singapore' exercises".

Shortly before Christmas the First Squadron (Lord Louis') and the Eighth exchanged ships. He and the greater part of his company transferred to the *Wishart*. At first he was downcast because the new ship was very inferior to the old. Built just as the last shots were being fired in 1918, *Wishart's* qualities can best be described by one comparison with the *Daring*: speed, designed 36 knots. Developed 38.2 knots during speed trials. *Wishart*: speed, designed 34 knots. Obtained in 1935 35.2 knots.

The two flotillas cheered each other out of the harbour and the ships of the First Squadron began their long journey back to Malta. This time they had an extra passenger aboard, a female honey bear which, despite her sex, was christened "Rastus". "Rastus" had been bought by Lady Louis, who had flown across to Java for a short visit after her husband had left Singapore.

During the voyage to the Mediterranean "Rastus" was a great favourite of the ship, although she was at times both intractable and temperamental. She almost created a crisis at a pet party given aboard ship for the other members of the squadron during a refuelling interval at Aden. The *Wishart* was represented by "Ruff", a woolly dog, "Andrew", a tortoise, and of course by "Rastus". The *Keppel* was represented by two leopards and the hosts at the party were two mongooses. Whether "Rastus" had never learned manners, or whether the heat and horror of Aden had merely put her in a bad mood, is not recorded, but she decided that she could take on the rest of the animals single-handed on the quarter-deck. Finally the area had to be cleared and "Rastus" propitiated by her favourite cocktail of condensed milk, which she sucked out of a can.

After many weeks at sea the squadron finally reached Malta. When they arrived the commanding officer sent a message to the whole flotilla stating that, in accordance with the custom of the Service, the destroyers should immediately on arrival at their new base go to sea for "working-up" exercises, which included gunnery practice, torpedo practice, and so forth. The message went on to say that, as the flotilla would unfortunately reach Malta early on Saturday morning, it would be too late to make arrangements for targets, and that they would, therefore, have to contain themselves in patience until Monday morning before starting the "working up". It was left to each commanding officer to convey this information as he thought fit to his ship's company.



## LAST VICEROY

Lord Louis' method of conveying the welcome news was to post the following notice:

"After many weary weeks at sea we are arriving at our Fleet base for the first time. Service custom would demand that the flotilla should immediately put to sea for 'working-up' practice, but our Captain (i.e. officer commanding the flotilla), recognizing the unusual circumstances of our arrival after such a long time at sea, and the fact that we have only recently learned to become good seamen, if not yet good gunners, has made special arrangements to give the flotilla two full days' rest in harbour so that each watch can have an opportunity of getting some leave. Thus, on Monday, we shall start refreshed and ready for a hard period of working up."

The effect of this message was not only to cheer his ship's company very substantially but also to enhance the prestige of Captain (D).

By the time the *Wishart* had reached Malta Lord Louis had his programme of keeping everybody busy well under way. He had organized a band and had started the publication of a ship's newspaper. One-third of this was to be devoted to ship's news and two-thirds to wireless press-news. He also had begun to train his men to win the various flotilla and inter-flotilla trophies for gunnery, communications exercises, water polo, swimming, football, in fact for all the competitions held between ships of the Navy. That spring and summer he was continually suggesting to the teams various ways to improve themselves. For his part, he played polo, and its variant, water-polo, whenever he had the chance. He pursued another of his hobbies to the extent of getting the first motion-picture projector especially designed for use by the Royal Navy installed on his ship. This, needless to say, was much appreciated.

In July the Fleet started on its summer cruise, during which there were such special stimulating interests for the crew as a visit by King Alphonso XIII when the ship was in port at Leghorn. Later, at Cannes, the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Simpson came aboard on several different occasions. However, the first thought of both the officers and the men of the *Wishart*, and for that matter of the rest of the Fleet, was the coming Fleet Regatta to be held at the end of the cruise.

Lord Louis' attitude towards the Regatta is expressed in his account of the ship's commission. Of the occasion he says: "A ship who 'embarks on the Regatta' with 'the will to win' is a ship who has a healthy morale bred in her and one who possesses that 'guts' which has been found to be so valuable in time of war." Expressing this opinion to the entire ship's company early in June, he said he wanted the *Wishart* to take all the trophies in gunnery, water-polo, boxing, football, cricket, and rifle

and pistol shooting, but he especially wanted her to win the boat races at the Regatta.

So, three months before the Regatta was due to take place, Lord Louis began selecting, organizing and training the crews for the whaler races. One of his maxims in polo was that the captain should "make himself responsible, tactfully and without undue nursing, for the training and physical fitness of the players".

With his customary scientific thoroughness he applied himself to this problem. He records that he conducted a series of experiments on the rowing of whalers and learned that a stroke of thirty-eight and one-half to the minute produced the best overall results. He arrived at this figure by measuring the "overlap" between the place where the oar of the man nearest the bow and the place where the oar of the man nearest the stern (the stroke) entered the water on the next stroke. Knowing the distance between the two places and the number of strokes pulled per minute, it was easy for him to compute with considerable accuracy the most efficient way of rowing a whaler. He observed that the speeds obtained by numbers of strokes per minute varied between thirty and forty-two and plotted the results on a graph, from which he learned that the most efficient number was thirty-eight.

His next consideration was how best to train the crews to maintain this rapid stroke. In July he put into effect a system of progressive training which required the officers', seamen's, petty officers', communications', and artificers' crews to pull the number of strokes given by the day of the month multiplied by ten. By this progressive method he had his crews able to maintain the rapid stroke for ten minutes a day within forty days. As the summer cruise interfered with training, Lord Louis had a "dry puller" installed on the forward deck of the *Wishart*. Each morning when they were at sea and the crews were unable to train in a whaler, the order went around the ship, "Seamen's crew muster on fo'c'sle for dry-puller exercises," and every man of such crew in turn would have to do the required number of strokes on the dry puller. "It was awful," Able Seaman Lawlor told me. "It was harder to pull the oars on that machine than it would have been to pull against a fourteen-knot tide." He almost killed officers and men alike on that machine, and the only person who seemed to enjoy sweating on it was Lord Louis himself, who was to captain the officers' crew. Finally, on September 4, the day of the Regatta came. The cruise was over and the ships of the Fleet were assembled in harbour to watch the races.

In the morning Lady Louis and the wives of the other officers came aboard to witness the last-minute preparations. The boats had been rubbed down. Resin bags were in evidence for the hands of the racing crews and the men were very excited. They had been almost starved for



several days because Lord Louis had trained them on light foods, with an emphasis on dry cereals. He had also given them constant pep-talks on the subject of abstinence from drink and had actually managed to make them all take the pledge temporarily.

The whaler races were to start. The bridge and forward decks were crowded and everybody was trying to secure the best possible view of the course. After several races the *Wishart* and one other ship tied for points. This was the situation when it was time for the petty officers to man the whaler. As they pulled away from the ship towards the starting-line Lord Louis shouted down to them, "If you don't win, I'll derate the lot of you." As it turned out, the threat was unnecessary. The petty officers scored an easy victory and were hailed with a roar of applause.

From then on victory was certain. In the next race the whaler from the *Wishart* won by a clear fifteen lengths. One of the officers who kept time with Lord Louis' stroke said the only thing that made such torture worth while was to see the expression on Lord Louis' face when it was announced that the *Wishart* had won not only the Regatta but also six of the eleven available cups.

In traditional naval terms the *Wishart* was now Cock of the Fleet. That evening the occasion was duly celebrated by all concerned and in his exuberance Lord Louis had his steward obtain a live cock, which was lashed to a spar high on the ship's mast in view of the entire Fleet. The victory was commemorated in the *Wishart News* by the following stanza:

He trained each crew to make it best,  
On each man's shirt he pinned a crest,  
His infectious spirit did the rest,  
Our Captain, Our Regatta.

To complete the triumph a congratulatory message was received the next day from the King. In a personal letter to Lord Louis from the officer commanding destroyers in the Mediterranean Fleet, Rear-Admiral A. B. Cunningham wrote: "It is always very difficult to get a Chatham crew really going, but when one succeeds they go all out. They are not responsive to any sort of blarney. They are more intelligent."

After this overwhelming success the remaining seven months of his time in the *Wishart* were something of an anti-climax, relieved only by a succession of exercises and drills, firing practice, general drill, torpedo night-firing, and combined exercises with the Army.

Prior to relinquishing his command, having completed his full term of two years on the station, on April 28 Lord Louis assembled the entire ship's company on the quarter-deck and addressed them as follows:

## THE PRACTICAL PLAYBOY

"When we arrived at this station, I said we would win every trophy that was to be won. As you all know, the *Wishart* teams triumphed in every game except football, and in football we lost every match. I feel that I was directly responsible for this because I quite forgot to specify which trophy I meant to win, the silver cup for the best team or the wooden spoon for the worst. We won the spoon so I can safely say that I fulfilled my promise."

When he finished the speech he was rowed round the ship three times and then pulled ashore in the "whaler" manned by his officers while the entire ship's company broke ranks and cheered as the boat pulled away.

He was next due for a staff appointment ashore and was ordered to join the Fleet Air Arm at the Admiralty.

Ever since 1935, when Mussolini had shown the might of a regenerated "Imperial Rome" by conquering a nation of primitive blacks, Whitehall had faced the inevitability of a European conflagration. While Mr. Stanley Baldwin was lulling the nation into a false sense of security, the Admiralty was organizing itself for war. It was generally felt by the Board of Admiralty that it was necessary to do something about the Fleet Air Arm, which had been under dual Admiralty and Air Ministry control since 1918. This had come about because in World War I the Navy had looked on the air, to use Admiral Mark Kerr's words, as the "monkey's orphan", and were delighted to switch responsibility for it to a separate ministry. As a result, whereas the Admiralty retained control of carriers, the responsibility for the 'planes on those carriers and the personnel who flew them was under the Air Ministry. The friction point where air and sea met to be co-ordinated was the Fleet Air Arm of the Naval Air Division of the Admiralty. Now, however, the Admiralty had seen the error of a system whereby both the organization and administration of a single department had become the responsibility of two ministries.

So the Admiralty was anxious to have the Fleet Air Arm become a part of the Royal Navy and to have their voice heard as loudly as possible in Coastal Reconnaissance and Convoy Protection matters. Lord Louis was appointed with the understanding that his main responsibility was to be the furtherance of Fleet Air Arm control by the Navy and the mapping of its future. His job entailed constant "lobbying". It meant talking to Cabinet Ministers, arranging for naval officers to meet politicians and politicians to meet naval officers. On one occasion the First Sea Lord met the King quite informally at "Adsdean", and on another a Member of Parliament named Winston Churchill spoke brilliantly to the House on the importance, or rather the necessity, of having the Fleet Air Arm transferred to Admiralty control. Arranging such matters kept him so

busy that he was even unable to go down to Roehampton as often as he would have wished to play polo.

But his chief job was as staff officer, being principally responsible for briefing the Board of Admiralty with the necessary arguments to bring up at their discussions with the Air Ministry before the Minister of Defence.

As was to be expected, however, Lord Louis, while fulfilling his duties in a small room in the Admiralty, was not content merely to perform tasks which were assigned to him. He was finding many other interests. For some time he had been worried about the anti-aircraft armament in destroyers and even larger ships. They were equipped with nothing between a 4.2 gun and a machine-gun. Neither of these would be of any use against aircraft if a concentrated attack was made. The 4.2 was far too cumbersome and the machine-gun did not have sufficient stopping power. Whatever anti-aircraft ordnance existed at that time was definitely obsolete and what was needed was some form of gun which was light, rapid-firing, had a high muzzle velocity and fired an explosive shell. Such a piece of ordnance would be the only answer to air attacks by the latest models of German dive-bombers which the Navy knew were then being manufactured.

In January 1937, when Lord Louis was becoming more and more seriously concerned with this problem and war clouds were continuing to gather over Europe, Lord Sempill and the former British Naval Attaché in Japan were having lunch one day with a man whom they had known two years before in Tokyo. He was an expatriate Austrian engineer, then working at the Swiss Oerlikon Works, and was in London offering exclusively to the British Government the new anti-aircraft cannon which he had developed there. Antoine Gazda, for this was his name, told of the coming danger of the German dive-bomber and explained how his newly developed cannon was the answer to it. The naval officer, who was a classmate of Lord Louis and knew of his readiness and over-eagerness to try new ideas, as well as his abilities in persuasion, exclaimed, "Commander Lord Louis Mountbatten is the man you should see, and right away."

The next day the naval officer and Gazda went to see Lord Louis at his small and crowded office in the Admiralty. Gazda, after being introduced, immediately explained his gun and forecast the coming danger from which, he said, even the most powerful battleship with her existing defences could not escape. Lord Louis listened, but did not give the slightest indication that he, too, had seen this danger. He brought up all the arguments fashionable in the Navy at that time, such as the flat statement that a battleship was impervious to air attack. Against each argument he would force Gazda to make his own point and then he would bring up another argument. When he was convinced of Gazda's knowledge

of the importance of such a weapon and the sincerity of his enthusiasm he asked to be shown reports of practical tests of Oerlikon guns. When he learned that the gun was capable of firing five hundred high-explosive shells per minute, at a muzzle velocity virtually twice that of any gun of its weight then in existence, he jumped to his feet impulsively and took Gazda to see his superior, the Chief of the Naval Air Division. This step was the prelude to a succession of 283 meetings to which Gazda was called by Admiralty officials over the next three years. The length of this fight to get an idea accepted was to disillusion Lord Louis as to their mental alertness.

A week later Lord Louis arranged that Gazda deliver a lecture before some of the highest Admiralty officials, including the Third Sea Lord, Controller of the Admiralty, the Assistant Chief of Staff, the Director of the Naval Air Division, the Director of Naval Ordnance, and their staffs. The lecture was scheduled for ten in the morning, but Gazda arrived early and met Lord Louis in one of the corridors, although practically nobody else had as yet arrived. When Lord Louis was greeted by Gazda he noted that a bad cold had almost robbed the inventor of his voice, so he immediately offered to deliver the lecture himself, provided Gazda would handle the film projections. Quickly glancing over Gazda's notes giving calculations, measurements, and ballistic data, he translated the metres in which the material was presented into feet and shortly afterwards walked in to deliver an hour's lecture with an ability which astonished Gazda as much as it did many of the others present.

But this was just the first round of the fight. No official attention was paid to the gun whatsoever. It was described as being "only fit for scrap-iron", and the rumour spread that to fire it was certain death to the gunner. Such a response was calculated to make Lord Louis fight for it all the harder, yet even he was not immune to the slander with which certain officers in the Admiralty had blackened the reputation of the inventor and his gun. Lord Louis' enthusiasm for the Oerlikon was said to spring not from interest in the Service but rather from his having large sums invested in the Oerlikon Works. When this slander was brought to his attention he promptly pointed out that in his position a few pounds could make no difference to him, though it might be true there were certain others in the Admiralty who were less disinterested.

Lord Louis went so far as to have one of the Oerlikon guns mounted at his own expense on the "Vosper" 102, built by his friend, Peter Du Cane, and the first successful M.T.B. boat, when the craft was turned over to the Navy. No sooner was it commissioned, however, than on some flimsy excuse the gun was removed.

Frequently during those days Louis and Gazda would meet at breakfast, in his elaborate penthouse at the top of "Brook House", and marvel

## LAST VICEROY

at the subterfuges to which certain senior officers were prepared to resort to keep the gun from receiving even proper consideration on its merits.

As the months went by, and no perceptible progress was made, Gazda developed an Air Force cannon on the same principal as the Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun, and talked about getting the Air Ministry interested in it, but Lord Louis asked him to "concentrate on the Navy". Shortly after he had made the request Lord Louis called from "Brook House" inviting the inventor to come to dinner that evening. Gazda arrived to find Mountbatten with another naval officer who was introduced with the words: "This is Sir Roger Backhouse, at present in command of the Home Fleet. However, in three months' time he will be the First Sea Lord of the Admiralty and has pledged himself to help us."

Three months later Backhouse was appointed First Sea Lord and in due course the Board of Admiralty adopted the Oerlikon as standard equipment. An order was put through for one thousand units, but it would normally take another five or six months to have the order approved by the proper authorities and money allocated for the purchase of the cannon. Gazda, however, returned to Switzerland without waiting for an official approval and began filling the order with only the personal assurance of Lord Louis that "nothing could stop the order from going through".

They were soon to learn the strength of the interests in the Admiralty that did not want the gun accepted, however. Sir Roger Backhouse, exhausted by overwork, suddenly died, and shortly after his death the order was cancelled. Lord Louis fought against the cancellation and the subsequent excuses made by Treasury officials that necessary Swiss francs were not then available. Approval of the order finally came through in September 1939, and delivery of the cannon was made just before the Panzer divisions began to sweep across the Belgian borders.

The long armistice had come to an end and Germany had once more attacked the British Empire. In 1914, on the eve of the First World War, Prince Louis of Battenberg had mobilized the Navy. Twenty-five years later, on the eve of the Second World War, his son, Lord Louis Mountbatten, had mobilized himself and as much of the Navy as would let itself be roused from decorous coma by the drums and "Heils" of the Nazis.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WHITE ENSIGN

POSSIBLY the only motion picture made during the pre-Pearl Harbour stages of the war which captured the imagination of audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, and was able to produce in Americans the illusion of living through those burning moments of England's lonely months against the Axis, was Noel Coward's *In Which We Serve*. Shown simultaneously in both England and America at a time when, according to the Germans, the British Navy had been obliterated, it did more than any other picture of the war to stir the public, by showing them without the aid of false heroics or sham posturing the heroism of a few. It also did much to restore the morale of the Royal Navy and to make its officers and men doubly proud of their Service. Indeed, that usually callous film magnate, Sir Arthur Jarrett, once told me he had wept while reading the script. What made the film so incomparably superior to others of the same kind was the simple truth of the story it tried to tell—the story of Lord Louis Mountbatten during the time when, in his ship the *Kelly*, he was in command of the 5th Destroyer Flotilla. The story as told, however, was, and only could be, a shadow of the reality.

Destroyers are the "light tanks" of the Navy. Fast and manœuvrable, they dash to the action front, fire their torpedoes, and veer away before the heavier guns of the enemy cruisers can be brought to bear on them.

When Mountbatten had completed the higher commanders' course at Aldershot and just been promoted Captain he was placed in command of a flotilla of the new "K"-class destroyers. He took up his new duties on June 27, 1939, and moved up to Newcastle-on-Tyne, where the destroyer *Kelly* was under construction.

Mountbatten had had many of his new ideas on ship design incorporated in this destroyer. He and a brilliant naval architect, A. P. Cole, planned her so that her strength should be fore and aft rather than athwartships, to reduce the usual tendency to break in two when severely hit. It was this one detail that made her able to withstand the many strains to which she was subjected before she finally sank off Crete two years later. He also had introduced a good many alterations in the organization of the bridge, centralizing all the bells so the captain could call any part of his ship without stepping away from the binnacle in the centre, and having the cat-walk made broader to afford room and protection for a cot so that, in times of danger, the captain could actually sleep on the bridge.

The *Kelly* had the initial advantage of more than the customary amount of room aboard, for, when she was originally designed, it was thought that she might be used to take the King and Queen across to Belgium on a projected visit to King Leopold. Special care had also been given to the decorating of the captain's cabin. The woodwork was of light pickled oak, the furniture upholstered with orange cretonne, the walls painted a matt blue to harmonize with the curtains, which were also blue, banded with white horizontal stripes, and the carpet was a rich chocolate brown.

While the *Kelly* was being readied for commission Mountbatten shuttled between the Station Hotel at Newcastle and his penthouse in London. In Newcastle he spent most of his time at the dockyards, making recommendations and continually exhorting the shipyard hands to work faster; while in London he spent much of it at the Admiralty, pushing his ideas for changes in the design of his ship. During that summer he talked with many of his friends in the Government, among them Anthony Eden and Duff Cooper, about the danger of war in Europe. The gloomy predictions he heard contrasted sharply with the official optimism in Government circles which proclaimed, albeit nervously, that something could still be done and that war was not yet inevitable.

Although the situation looked ominous, Mountbatten was delighted when he learned that his flotilla and that of Captain Warburton-Lee were both to be stationed in the Mediterranean, where they, as Captains of the two newest flotillas in the Navy, could continue the friendly rivalry begun at Malta when Mountbatten had commanded the *Wishart* and Warburton-Lee had commanded the *Witch*, both units of the same destroyer force.

But the spurious optimism of the politicians was fast being dispelled by the authentic gloom of the professional warriors, who recognized across the Channel the signs of Germany's girding for "total war". Intelligence reports which would have shaken the optimism of a Miltiades flowed into the Admiralty. They must revise their plans. Mountbatten received secret instructions telling him what to expect, and advising him that he and the 5th Flotilla were to remain a part of the Home Fleet instead of being detached to the Mediterranean. As is usual in preparation for Mediterranean duty, the *Kelly* had been painted light grey. Now she had to be repainted the dark grey of the Home Fleet. Mountbatten was the first man over the side to help with the work, clad in white overalls and white gloves. That day he called for a special issue of grog and cigarettes.

Shortly after this episode the *Kelly* steamed out of Newcastle, manned by a skeleton crew, and headed for the naval base at Chatham, where she was to be commissioned. There her full complement of 240

## THE WHITE ENSIGN

men were ready to come aboard and, such was Mountbatten's reputation, these had been chosen from among 3,000 volunteers who wanted to serve under him. The crew assembled at the dockside, where Mountbatten addressed them, telling them he wished his ship to be both happy and efficient.

"You may think I am being ambitious wanting both, but, in my experience, you can't have one without the other. A ship can't be happy unless she's efficient, and she certainly won't be efficient unless she's happy. Now for our programme. You've most of you seen the commissioning programme of the *Kelly* published in 'Chatham General Orders', and you will have noted that this allows the customary three weeks. In peace-time it takes all of three weeks to get a new ship's company together, to let them sling their hammocks and teach them their stations and various duties, to get all the cordite and shells and oil fuel and stores on board and so on and so forth. Well, you've read your papers and you know that Ribbentrop signed a non-aggression pact with Stalin yesterday. As I see it, that means war next week, so I will give you not three weeks but three days to get this ship ready to sail. None of us will take off our clothes or sling our hammocks or turn in for the next three days and nights until the job is finished, then we'll send Hitler a telegram saying 'The *Kelly*'s ready—you can start your war.'"

Mountbatten was right, for now all was ready for Hitler to lead Germany to eventual catastrophe. Berlin sent a sheaf of ultimatums to Warsaw, but the German General Staff did not wait for the answers to be received. In the dead light of dawn, September 1, 1939, crack mechanized divisions crossed Poland's borders at every accessible point while Mountbatten, aboard the *Kelly*, was leading his flotilla at thirty knots through the grey waters of the North Sea. No one on board could have guessed the trials which lay ahead before that gallant lady found her last berth in the blue depths of the Mediterranean.

Shortly after the declaration of war Mountbatten was given secret orders to pick up a certain officer off the southern coast of England and proceed to Le Havre with all possible haste. The officer was Randolph Churchill, then acting Equerry to the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. When the ship reached Havre, Major Churchill went ashore and shortly returned with the Duke and Duchess, accompanied by a quantity of alligator skin luggage, a sealyham, a dachshund, and a miniature sheep-dog. The ducal pair looked somewhat worn, for they had just driven from Strasbourg over roads cluttered with military and civilian traffic moving to and from the front. As soon as they had boarded the ship they inspected her company and then, this ceremony completed, the destroyer steamed out of port, heading full speed for England. The Duke and Duchess were delighted to see Mountbatten again, and that evening they



had a most convivial meal in his cabin, during which no mention was made of their three years of exile. After dinner they visited the ward-room to talk to the officers. One of those present described them as being very nervous, but in apparent good health after a summer spent on the Riviera. On the afternoon of the next day the *Kelly* arrived in Portsmouth and the Commander-in-Chief invited them to dine ashore, but the Duke declined, preferring a final quiet meal with his cousin aboard ship. After dinner they passed the ranked crew and walked down the gangplank. The ex-King, who had abdicated in 1936, stood again on British soil. In the dim blue light that illuminated the scene only the faintly gleaming bayonets of the guard of honour, standing at "Present arms" on the jetty, were visible. As the Windsors stepped ashore, a prolonged cheer from both officers and men aboard the *Kelly* broke the silence of the night.

Until winter, there were no more colourful incidents. The flotilla, now based at Scapa Flow, was engaged in routine patrol duty. One day in December, when the *Kelly* was berthed alongside the jetty at Newcastle, she received a message by radio: "Two oil tankers in trouble at position 055 degrees 05 minutes north, 001 degrees 07 minutes west; believed to be German submarines in area; take *Kelly* to intercept." Without delay she cast off and hurried down the River Tyne towards the position given. It was dusk when she came in sight of the burning tankers, the flames from which cast a crimson reflection far out on to the dark jadesea. Mountbatten, on the bridge, ordered "Full speed ahead" and directed the destroyer in a wide circle around the blazing tankers trying, with the aid of Asdic gear, to locate any submarines in the area. Suddenly there was a scrape of metal against metal near the bow. The *Kelly* had hit a mine. It struck the hull again amidships and finally exploded with a searing, brilliant flash near the stern. The ship reared out of the water with the sudden jerk of a wounded stallion. All the officers on the bridge were hurled down by the impact except Mountbatten, who had been holding on to the pilorus at the time. The entire stern of the ship was a twisted mass of torn and buckled metal. Several hours later tugs arrived from Newcastle and towed the damaged destroyer back to port. Later, Mountbatten learned that the tankers and the *Kelly* had been struck by one of the magnetic mines dropped by the Germans off the English coast from aircraft under cover of night.

It had been a trying experience for all on board, for each had felt the mine bumping first under the bow, then under the engine-room, then under the ward-room, before it finally went off as it touched the propellers. It had proved too much for one of the stokers in the engine-room, who, after the second bump of the mine, deserted his post in the hour of danger and ran up the ladder to the deck. The ship had been commis-

sioned during the first week of the war and had been less than four months in service. It was essential, therefore, ruthlessly to stamp out cowardice when the first symptom of it appeared, for moral sickness is the most contagious disease in a ship's company.

On returning to harbour, Mountbatten had the defaulter arrested and brought before him.

"Do you know what the penalty is for desertion of your post in the face of the enemy?" he asked.

The trembling young man weakly replied, "Yes, sir—it is death."

"Quite right," snapped Mountbatten. "I will stand this case over and deal with it later."

After about two hours he cleared "lower deck" and addressed the assembled ship's company thus: "Today we have been through one of the most trying experiences which can befall a newly commissioned ship in war. We have had to endure the suspense of feeling a mine bumping along the bottom, waiting every moment for it to explode. Fortunately it was not a very good mine, and did not go off until it reached the propellers. Out of 240 men on board this ship, 239 behaved as they ought to have, and as I expected them to behave, but one was unable to control himself and deserted his post, and incidentally his comrades, in the engine-room. I had him brought before me a couple of hours ago, and he himself informed me that he knew the punishment for desertion of his post could be death. You will therefore be surprised to hear that I propose to let him off with a 'caution'. One caution to him, and a second one to myself, for having failed in four months to impress my personality and doctrine on each and all of you to prevent such an incident from occurring. From now on I wish to make it clear I expect everyone to behave in the way the 239 did, and to stick to their post in action to the last. I will under no circumstances whatever again tolerate the slightest suspicion of cowardice or indiscipline, and I know from now on that none of you will present me with any such problem."

In the subsequent actions of the *Kelly* the ship's company behaved with unparalleled courage, discipline, and fortitude; for when she was torpedoed in the North Sea not one man left his post, even in the compartments adjacent to the explosion, until ordered to leave it; and when the *Kelly* turned turtle at thirty-two knots in the battle of Crete, in May 1941, all the men remained at their posts, even in the engine-room, and fought their way out as best they could, but only after she had capsized. The sailor who had deserted his post before was among the number who finally went down with the ship.

In those early days Mountbatten was not slow to establish discipline in every direction. It is the rule of the Service for efficient commanders of warships to deal harshly with men who break their leave, particularly

immediately after the commissioning of a vessel. Mountbatten was no exception to the rule, and any leave-breaker who had not an unassailable reason for his absence over leave could count on being sentenced to the maximum penalty when he appeared at the Defaulters' Table.

One innovation he introduced was the ordering of a senior member of the men's own mess to be present at each investigation as an independent observer so that his messmates might be assured the accused had had a fair trial. As he was fond of saying, "It is not only necessary that justice should be done, but most important that justice should also 'be seen' to be done."

During the first winter of the war, when the black-out and snow were making conditions very unpleasant, Mountbatten was on the quarter-deck of the *Kelly* watching his men returning from a week's leave granted during boiler cleaning. He noticed one of them hobbling along very painfully and, on inquiry, found he was suffering from a badly sprained ankle. When he went to see him in the sick bay he learnt that this man had sprained his ankle on setting out from home. For the return journey he had had to struggle to the station and, during the long ride, had also had to change trains in the black-out. Unable to get a conveyance for the last lap, he had limped the whole way to the ship, determined not to be late.

As soon as the sailor had sufficiently recovered, Mountbatten cleared "lower deck" and addressed the men as follows: "No one can say I have not been strict in dealing with leave-breakers, and I have been gratified by the very small number I have had to deal with, but it always seemed to me hard that a man on returning from leave can only look forward to punishment if he is late and no reward if he fights his way through difficulties to be on time. As you all know, such a case has recently occurred—Able Seaman Smith limped on with a sprained ankle from his home, and carried on to the end after a long and uncomfortable journey. I intend to recognize his devotion to duty by giving him leave with the port watch, as well as the starboard watch, the next time the ship gives leave."

This unprecedented action on the part of their commander raised the morale of the ship's company higher than ever.

The shipbuilders at Hawthorne Leslie soon succeeded in repairing the damage done by the explosion of the mine and the *Kelly* was again ready to go to sea. The flotilla received orders to proceed to the naval base at Scapa Flow, but were intercepted on their way by an order to accompany a convoy leaving Rosyth bound for Norway.

When the convoy had been several days at sea, in the early morning hours of a night as black as only a night in mid-winter in the North Sea can be, a lieutenant was standing watch on the bridge while Mountbatten was snatching a few hours of badly needed rest in his new cabin.

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The *Kelly* was doing an independent zigzag, for the convoy was passing through an area where submarines had been causing trouble by attacking escorts. Suddenly, directly ahead, the officer on watch saw white light and a shadow darker than the gloom around it. He immediately took "avoiding action", yelling "Hard aport" to the coxswain, but too late. The propeller guard of another ship, a British destroyer escorting a convoy passing in the opposite direction, ploughed along the *Kelly's* side, ripping open her hull like some gigantic can-opener.

Fortunately, an inspection disclosed that little serious damage had been done, except to the nerves of three fledgling seamen whose hammock nests had been flung against the damaged side of the hull. But this collision was the 161st of the year.

An incident that happened as a result of this ramming gave rise to the mocking laughter which greeted many of Mountbatten's ideas. When H.M.S. *Exmouth* had disappeared without trace several weeks earlier, he had thought it would be a good idea to have a routine message sent immediately when radio operators felt a shock to a ship, saying, "I have been hit by a mine or by a torpedo—uncertain which," so that the rest of the Fleet would have some idea what had happened to a stricken member vessel. Frequently there was not time, after a ship had been hit, to originate a special message on the bridge and transmit it to the radio station for sending. On this occasion, when the *Kelly* and the *Mohawk* (the name of the other British destroyer) collided, this signal was sent before it could be countermanded, and the *Mohawk*, picking it up immediately, replied, "Not mine, but me." This caused a great deal of merriment in the Fleet. Nevertheless, Mountbatten's idea was incorporated in Admiralty orders issued three weeks later.

After the accident the *Kelly*, escorted by the submarine depot-ship *Maidstone*, proceeded to Scapa Flow for temporary repairs. When they had almost reached their destination the Admiralty radioed: "Alter course. Proceed Rosyth." But Rosyth radioed, "Full up." Admiralty then radioed, "Proceed Greenock." The *Kelly* was running short of oil, but when she had almost reached Greenock that base also radioed "Full up." Then the Admiralty radioed, "Proceed London Graving Dock at Poplar." The *Kelly* was only just able to pull into the London Graving Dock at Poplar, where, in five weeks, she was again made seaworthy.

While she was there, Mountbatten invited the King and Queen and the Duke and Duchess of Kent aboard for dinner. After dinner they went to the ward-room to be shown *The Great Dictator*, a Chaplin film which had not yet been released in the West End. Mountbatten had had some difficulty in installing the projector because it produced an unpleasant amount of noise in the limited confines of the ward-room and had to be too near the screen to project an image big enough. He finally overcame

both difficulties by installing the projector in the pantry adjoining the ward-room and from there projecting the picture by the use of a series of mirrors. As a result of this ingenious arrangement a picture of maximum size was projected on the screen and most of the distracting noise of the projector was muffled. According to reports the evening was a great success.

While the *Kelly* was being repaired, winter was drawing to an end and the German General Staff had begun another great offensive. Following their usual plan of attack, they had staged a mass invasion of Norway and Denmark at dawn. Denmark surrendered at once, but Norway put up a token resistance, although her chief ports and all her airfields in the south were in German hands within forty-eight hours. A small Allied Expeditionary Force was sent to the assistance of Norway, but the Germans were masters of the air and the Allied troops were subjected daily to low-level bombardment.

The Allied Commanders were not slow to recognize their blunder and ordered their forces to be evacuated a fortnight later. Mountbatten, aboard the *Kelly*, was ordered from Sheerness, where she was then stationed, to Scapa Flow to join an Allied fleet which was to be sent to the relief of the Expeditionary Force. He arrived at Scapa Flow on April 29. That afternoon he attended an Inter-Allied Commanding Officers' conference which was to decide on procedure in the evacuation of the 5,000 beleaguered survivors from the port of Namsos, on the coast. The plan considered was to evacuate the troops there on two successive nights. On the second night a part of the naval force, including the *Kelly*, was to return to complete the evacuation begun the night before. Of this plan Mountbatten later wrote, "I did not much relish the idea of remaining in the vicinity of German aerodromes most of the intervening day and was glad to hear that alternative arrangements were under discussion to complete the evacuation in one night."

Before sailing that evening as leader of four British destroyers and one French destroyer he addressed his ship's company: "The first ship in and the last ship out will have the most dangerous and honourable jobs. I believe that this choice will be left to me. Whom shall I choose?" and back came a roar, "*The Kelly!*"

"Unfortunately" (the word is Mountbatten's) Sir Philip Vian, who, in the reorganized "one-night" operation, became senior destroyer captain of the operations, chose the most dangerous position for his own ship, and "although he let me go in first, he naturally elected to stay to the last himself, in the *Afridi*".

The trip to Namsos across the North Sea was not uneventful. The first day out the force was spotted by German aircraft and bombed, but luckily no hits were scored and the destroyers ran into a thick fog before the evening brought another attack.



The Mountbattens Mobilize: Lady Louis, Lord Louis and Patricia





## THE WHITE ENSIGN

So thick was this fog that Mountbatten asked from the Admiral in charge of the force permission for his division of four destroyers to evacuate the first night's contingent under its cover, thereby ensuring additional safety from air attack. Permission granted, he began a mad dash along the seventy miles of coast that lay between him and the fjord just before five in the morning. Suddenly the fog cleared, and only just in time to save the *Kelly* from crashing into a forest of submerged rock observed scarcely 200 feet ahead. "Any gratitude I felt," said Mountbatten, "was more than counterbalanced by the fact that I knew the evacuation could not be carried out by daylight, except in a fog, on account of the continual bombing raids on Namsos."

The division was then obliged to retreat into the fogbanks to seaward, playing hide-and-seek with the German bombers until evening, when they rejoined the main force.

Of that evening, Mountbatten said:

"I shall never forget that rush up the fjord ahead of the rest at twenty-six knots. It was past sunset, but at this time of year there is perpetual twilight here and one could see the magnificent snow-capped hills and fertile valleys with their friendly, peaceful farmhouses. And I said to myself: 'This can't be war. War never came to so quiet and innocent a spot. . . .' As we turned the last corner of the fjord and the town of Namsos came into sight the shock was even greater. The whole front was ablaze. The stone buildings and the church were half knocked down, the wooden buildings were charred to the ground. The thought passed through my mind, 'This is one of those extravagant scenes in one of those super-expensive film productions, but the producer has rather overdone the effect.'"

The evacuation was carried out in great haste and was perfectly organized. The soldiers who came aboard the *Kelly* were all French *Chasseurs Alpins*. The ship's company asked that 5,000 cigarettes intended for them should be distributed amongst the French troops.

The Germans, surprisingly enough, did not take advantage of the light from the burning waterfront to stage a night raid. Of this Mountbatten wrote:

"I simply cannot understand why the Germans did not bomb us all to hell during that part of the evacuation; thousands of men were lined up on the jetties; rows of ships lay alongside or very near: the mess and confusion which attends evacuations could have been converted into a holocaust that would have been remembered forever and torn our prestige to ribbons."



By 1 a.m. the first transport sailed under Mountbatten's orders, and shortly thereafter the whole evacuation was completed. On the way back to England, although the force was attacked by forty aircraft, only one ship in his division was sunk, the French destroyer *Bison*.

By May 8 the *Kelly* was again at sea, hardly having had time to provision and refuel. This time, before she again returned to port, a German official communiqué announced that she had been sunk off the German coast by an *E*-boat. Had it not been for the superhuman efforts of Mountbatten, the German communiqué would not have lied.

Late on the evening of May 9, the *Kelly* was leading Mountbatten's flotilla against a German minelaying force, which had been reported operating off the Dutch coast, when an aircraft escort reported a submarine ahead. The *Kelly* and the *Kandahar* proceeded to search for her, but after an hour another report was received from the aircraft giving the position of the minelaying force, and Mountbatten decided to rejoin the body of his flotilla without further delay and go after it. Half an hour later a destroyer was sighted to port on the horizon. It was the *Bulldog*, which had lost her own force to northward and asked to join Mountbatten's. As she was coming into position, the flotilla was sighted by German aircraft. It was now after ten in the evening and the visibility was becoming increasingly poor. In the yellow twilight of the northern summer night Mountbatten could see banks of mist forming over the smooth black surface of the sea. He had just ordered speed reduced to give the *Bulldog* time to catch up, when he and several others standing on the bridge spotted the blurred outlines of an enemy ship through the mist, and almost simultaneously saw the boiling track of a torpedo. It was drawing a white line on the port side and aiming straight for the bridge. They held their breath during the pause before the detonation. Later, Mountbatten gave his impression of that moment when he watched the torpedo coming towards the ship. " 'That's going to kill an awful lot of chaps,' I thought. Curious, isn't it, one's instinctive belief in personal immortality? "

A tremendous flash seemed for an instant to be wrenched out of the water, and flames rose higher than the bridge as a hole was blown in the ship fifty feet wide, extending from the waterline to the keel. Mountbatten shouted, "Take over secondary steering!" but the steersman reported, "No answer from the helm, sir."

The ship was now at a standstill and there was a terrible silence except for the hiss of escaping steam which combined with swirling black smoke to cloak the entire ship in a fog of dirty vapour. The internal damage was discovered to be considerable. As the engineering officer soon ascertained, the forward boiler-room was laid open to the sea. The tremendous force of the explosion had lifted the boiler off its bedplates and dashed it

against the after bulkhead, breaking through it and allowing the after boiler-room to be flooded. Shortly the steam and smoke cleared, and the *Bulldog*, which had been some distance astern, sighted the *Kelly* lying low in the water, down in the bow and with a heavy list to starboard. Believing her companion had probably been hit by a torpedo from a submarine, the *Bulldog* fired a pattern of depth-charges to northwards. She then returned cautiously towards the location of the *Kelly*, for by now the fog was beginning to thicken. With considerable difficulty she took the wounded ship in tow. Meanwhile, Mountbatten was busy on the bridge directing the jettisoning of all movable topweight such as torpedoes and depth-charges.

Finally they were headed for home, moving slowly through the now almost impenetrable fog. The *Kelly*, with her starboard gunwale awash, her decks at an angle of forty-five degrees, proved to be a heavy burden in tow. Ten minutes after midnight the throb of powerful engines was heard through the darkness and, suddenly emerging like a phantom from the mist, a white *E*-boat appeared, travelling at forty knots. She crashed into the *Bulldog* and her machine-guns began to clatter as, swinging along the cable connecting the two boats, she scraped down the starboard side of the *Kelly*, shearing off a motor-boat, davits, and guard-rails before disappearing astern into the swirling fog. As she passed, shouts from the Germans could be heard distinctly and, as she vanished, screams of "*Schweinehund!*" and "*Dummkopf!*" rang through the dark.

Throughout the remainder of that terrible night, and through the wan dawn which followed it, Mountbatten's first consideration was for the wounded, many of whom were trapped in the wreckage amidships. As the sick-bay had been demolished, the surgeon operated in the ward-room by the dim light of a few hand-torches. The heroism shown by the entire ship's company was epic. A stoker, badly lacerated and bleeding, lay for hours without complaint.

Early in the morning the *Kandahar* came alongside and the wounded were transferred to her. Mountbatten was still on the bridge. While the transfer was being effected, the roar of heavy German bombers became audible. They came over on their first attack, but were unable to effect any damage before being driven away by the guns on the destroyers and by two Hudsons, which fortunately arrived in time to provide air cover. Soon afterwards the escort was reinforced by two more destroyers, and that afternoon by two cruisers.

That terribly long afternoon, punctuated by repeated German air-raids, was almost the worst in Mountbatten's life. A large part of the crew were engaged in removing such dead as could be recovered from the wreckage. These were buried at sea in the time-honoured manner of the Royal Navy, each in a shotted hammock that slid into the waters to

the accompaniment of a rifle salute. "Bartimeus" describes the service conducted by Mountbatten on the quarter-decks:

"Through the solemn sentences read by the Captain came the orders, conveyed by word of mouth, from the bridge to the men working the hand steering-gear below—thus: 'Dust to dust . . . Starboard fifteen . . . Ashes to ashes . . . Midships,' and the replies came up from the steering-compartment, 'Fifteen degrees of starboard on, sir.'"

By this time the fog and calm of the preceding day were rapidly turning into a heavy sea and a steadily rising wind. The *Kelly*, her decks more awash than ever, was yawing. According to a myth, the admiral aboard one of the cruisers signalled Mountbatten, "Abandon ship." And then, as he ignored the signal, it was repeated. "Abandon *Kelly*, I am about to sink her." To this Mountbatten is supposed to have answered, "Not while I still have twelve torpedoes with which to sink you if you dare try it." It is a fact, however, that, although the admiral advised Mountbatten that the ship be abandoned, Mountbatten asked to be allowed to continue his attempt to save her. By this time she was listing so badly she appeared likely to sink at any moment, and he decided to transfer the entire ship's company to another destroyer, except for those actually required to man the guns. As the escorting destroyers stopped to launch boats for the transfer, a formation of German bombers came over and made their heaviest attack, but, although they managed to splinter the decks of the *Kelly*, no direct hits were scored. At sunset the tow cable snapped for the third time. Mountbatten left the bridge for almost the first time since the accident to assist his men in securing another cable. Covered from head to foot with oil, unshaven and haggard, he was, in spite of everything, the spirit of the ship. According to one who was there, he gave those men who had had no sleep or rest for thirty hours the will to go on by the force of his own unabated energy and cheerfulness.

Only six officers and twelve men out of those who had volunteered to remain aboard were now left. The *Kelly* was at a standstill, for the rough sea made it impossible to tow her. When the escorting aircraft reported two enemy submarines directly ahead, Mountbatten, realizing that she was no better than a sitting target, decided at last to transfer his volunteer party temporarily to the *Bulldog*.

That night the abandoned *Kelly* lay with the sea swirling over her bows and gunwales and through her flooded boiler-rooms, where still remained the trapped bodies of many of her dead. Until early the following morning destroyers circled round her in an endless chain patrol. At dawn two ocean-going tugs came alongside and the volunteers, who had

temporarily abandoned her, returned aboard to make fast the tow-ropes. Shortly after boarding the *Kelly* they found the forgotten ship's cat had been busy during their absence giving birth to a litter of kittens in the navigator's locker.

During the night the wind and waves had abated, but as morning wore on the sea had become rough again and the *Kelly* began to wallow painfully, her whole deck awash. At noon the German bombers came over again and what was left of the crew scrambled madly from one gun to another as each came to bear on the enemy aircraft. Enthusiastically Mountbatten himself worked one of them on the bridge, but the bombers remained too high for the fire to be effective, except to prevent their coming in any lower. The seaman who served as ship's cook rushed from galley to gun then back to galley during lulls in the fire. As his two duties called for different equipment he insisted on wearing a large white apron and a steel helmet during the entire day.

Fortunately the wind dropped by evening, and the rest of the trip to the mouth of the Tyne was made without mishap. On the afternoon of May 13, having been ninety-one hours in tow or hove-to, she and her tugs passed up the Tyne towards the cradle where she had been built. As she neared the shipyard thousands of spectators, who had gathered on both banks of the river because they had heard of the *Kelly's* extraordinary feat, waved to her skeleton crew, cheering wildly.

For Mountbatten it was an hour of tragedy and triumph. He had brought his ship back despite the determined efforts of German aircraft and submarines, but there had been many casualties, and there were many dead still lying below decks.

On arrival at Hawthorne Leslie the *Kelly* was placed in dry dock and Mountbatten went to the Station Hotel, where Lady Louis was waiting for him. A sheaf of telegrams awaited him as well, congratulating him on the fine seamanship he had shown in bringing the *Kelly* back to port. These were from the Board of Admiralty, the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet, and many others. Admiral Forbes wrote him, saying: "We all admired the way you stuck to it. It was worth it, and more from the moral point of view even than the material."

A. P. Cole, the naval architect who had worked with Mountbatten on the design of the *Kelly*, said to him after he had inspected the damage, "I don't think there was a prouder man in the country than myself when I stepped aboard and saw the result of our joint ideas come through safely after an explosion which would have sunk almost any other ship."

Three days after they arrived in port the last bodies had been removed from the twisted hull and, when the burial ceremony was over, leave was granted to officers and men. Mountbatten and his wife went to "Broadlands". He was extremely depressed for some time, having no patience

for anything or with anybody. "He cannot even concentrate on his horses," the stud groom complained.

When his leave was over Mountbatten led his 5th Destroyer Flotilla to the Humber, to take up escort duty. He and his staff lived ashore at Immingham, near Grimsby, an area which in peace-time had been used as a railway and dry-dock centre for cross-Channel freighters. They had arrived there shortly after the Dunkirk disaster, when there was widespread fear that the Germans would invade England by dropping paratroops on the South Coast, and it immediately had appeared to them that the Humber was the most likely place for the invasion to begin. Their forebodings were not mitigated by a serial run in a Sunday paper under the heading, "If you were a member of the German General Staff, what point would you choose to invade England?" One week Dr. X presented a plan for the invasion, a probable one, well conceived and accompanied by a map on which a large black arrow pointed to the Humber as "the place the Germans will invade".

When the excitement was at its height Mountbatten organized a defence against paratroopers. The officers of his flotilla, about forty in number, wore side arms at all times and were instructed to be in continual readiness to man specified defence stations. They were also supplied with four Lewis guns mounted on four staff cars. When they were not with him at sea, escorting coastal convoys by day, or on night patrols, they studied plans for defending the area.

As the cross-Channel raids became increasingly severe, Mountbatten began to realize more and more the inadequacy of their plans. He wrote to the Air Ministry about them, from whom he received some response, mostly unsatisfactory; so he invited his cousin, the Duke of Kent, who was then in the R.A.F., to lunch. On the appointed day the Duke and numerous senior officers from Grantham arrived. After the meal he explained to them how essential it was to set up strong defences in the Humber area, as it was an important refitting base for numerous destroyers and cruisers. His guests agreed with him, and within the week a couple of dozen barrage balloons arrived, as well as two battalions of Guards. Shortly after this meeting Mountbatten was ordered by the Admiralty to proceed to Plymouth.

There was consternation among his staff when Mountbatten told them the flotilla was ordered to go round the South Coast in daylight, for at that time the Germans' air superiority had made the English Channel about as safe for British shipping as the Kiel Canal. Somebody pessimistically predicted, "From the Humber to the Thames we will be mined, from the Thames to Dover bombed, from Dover to Lydd strafed, and from then on attacked by E-boats."

One can imagine the astonishment of all concerned when the flotilla

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leader arrived in the swept channel outside Plymouth without having been obstructed by either mine or bomber, E-boat or fighter. Yet they were still predicting gloomily to each other: "This is too good to last. We'll probably get it just before we get into the harbour." Somebody then remarked casually that submarines often masked their periscopes behind the buoys marking the swept channel and released torpedoes from that position. Suddenly, just as they came abreast of the last buoy, there was a sharp report. After the shouting of orders had subsided, a small voice came up from the chart-room, "Excuse me, sir, but it is customary for the automatic buoy of the swept channel to fire a gun every five minutes." The officers blushed.

While at Plymouth Mountbatten often led the flotilla in carrying out Channel sweeps, which entailed going as far as the Channel Islands and sometimes even Brest. An account given me by Lawlor, A.B., of an event of this period may be apocryphal, but since it represents the point of view of one of his seamen it may as well be repeated.

One day, when at sea in company (i.e. with the entire flotilla), the Admiralty radioed Mountbatten to intercept the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, and two Hipper-class cruisers, which were somewhere off the northern coast of France.

After some five hours he managed to establish contact with the enemy force about seventy-five miles away, and seized the occasion to broadcast to the ship's company over the public-address system from the microphone on the bridge:

"We are now in a position to avenge the *Kelly* and make a name for the 5th Destroyer Flotilla which will leave the River Plate battle in the background of naval history. I have been signalled by the Admiralty to intercept the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* and two Hipper-class cruisers, a force which is, as you know, far superior in every way to ours. I hope to allow one to survive and bring it back as a present to the Commander-in-Chief Western Approaches. I hope to sink the two battle-cruisers by torpedoes, of which we have fifty, and the cruisers in a running gun-battle. This should prove a most interesting action, and I know that each and every one of you will carry our fine tradition of the Fighting 5th Destroyer Flotilla through to the end. Good luck, good shooting, and good results."

Unfortunately, though they managed to keep contact with the enemy force for some time, they finally lost touch as the German Battle Squadron closed in to the coast behind their mine-barrier and entered the harbour of Brest. Mountbatten's flotilla continued to patrol the area about the harbour for the next twenty-four hours, but finally it became

evident that the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were not putting to sea again, at least not for some time.

"I have never seen Mountbatten so mad," an able seaman told me who was present at the time. "He was almost jumping up and down with rage at missing the fight." According to another informant, a certain feeling of relief was general as the destroyers steamed back towards Plymouth. The crew, who had not slept for thirty-six hours during the search, were given a double tot of rum as compensation.

Lawlor, A.B., further recounts that, back at Plymouth again, Mountbatten volunteered to proceed in command of a single destroyer to sink the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* with torpedoes while they were in harbour. This offer does not seem to have been accepted.

After four days' leave at "Broadlands" with his family, Mountbatten again put to sea with his flotilla. One day, just after joining company with two cruisers, they came in sight of a flotilla of German destroyers off the southern tip of the Irish coast, marauding among the convoys from South Africa. The signal for "general chase" was given and, keeping perfect station, the ships pursued the Germans as they fled southward towards Brest. The cruiser *Newcastle* fired her full 800 rounds of heavy ammunition at the retreating enemy craft, but they remained just out of range. At this point, a message from the German destroyers calling for air support was intercepted, and Mountbatten immediately radioed Coastal Command requesting fighter cover. Soon a heavy formation of Heinkel 110s came over and dropped their bombs, but without effect, shortly succeeded by five British Blenheim bombers sent out in response to Mountbatten's message. To everyone's dismay, these began to bomb their own ships, having been briefed that German destroyers had one funnel and British destroyers two, whereas the opposite was actually the case. The Blenheims attacked bravely, in spite of the destroyers' fire; but finally, with the aid of a smoke-screen, the 5th Flotilla were able to escape without damage. Unfortunately, one of the British 'planes was shot down.

Mountbatten returned to port furious. The briefing had been wrong, the pilots had been inexperienced, he had asked for fighters and Coastal Command had sent bombers. He had no sooner set foot ashore, without waiting to change his uniform, than he drove straight to Coastal Command Headquarters and reported what had happened. On the basis of a later report on the incident made by him to the Admiralty, much was done towards getting the R.A.F. organized under a Combined Headquarters, so there could be closer co-ordination between the two Services.

It was now almost eight months since the *Kelly* had been put out of commission. Mountbatten was still leading the flotilla in other destroyers.

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By a coincidence, on the day the repairs on the *Kelly* were completed he was leading his division from the bridge of the *Javelin*, on a patrol between Land's End and Start Point. At four in the morning of November 29 the watch reported gun-flashes to eastward off the British coast. Mountbatten, believing that these might be the flashes from the guns of some large German destroyers known to be operating off the coast, altered course in their direction and increased speed to thirty knots. After a few minutes the flashes ceased and Mountbatten turned the flotilla to south-eastward, to keep his force between the enemy and their base at Brest. Finally, at 5.40 in the morning, three large and two small vessels were sighted. The alarm was sounded to the flotilla, and Mountbatten ordered them to alter direction so as to converge towards the enemy's course. The radar direction-finder gave a perfect screen and showed that the enemy was close at hand.

Mountbatten's order for the occasion was: "No. 2 mounting—stand by with star-shell. All guns load with H.E. Torpedo-officer, bring all torpedoes to the ready."

The torpedo-officer reported back: "Torpedoes at the ready. Forward tubes trained starboard, after tubes trained port."

As the radio transmitter on the *Javelin* had broken down, Mountbatten had a signal flashed to the remainder of the division by Aldis lamp, "Am about to intercept enemy destroyers bearing starboard."

Then Mountbatten ordered, "Fire star-shell."

The brilliant glow of the star-shell brought the leading enemy heavy destroyer into sudden sharp relief against the blackness beyond. Simultaneously the German ships and the ships of Mountbatten's division opened fire. But they had both miscalculated the range, estimating they were some 4,000 yards, when in fact they were about 900 apart, so both broadsides, the German and the British, overshot their targets. Mountbatten instantly ordered a drastic reduction, and when the *Javelin* fired her second salvo she scored hits on the after superstructure of the leading enemy destroyer.

After this brief success, just as Mountbatten had ordered his ship to swing to port to fire her torpedoes, there was suddenly a shattering explosion and her bow disappeared in a searing sheet of flame. Barely had this first impact been absorbed before there was another explosion of equal violence at the stern, which was hit by a second torpedo.

So violent were the explosions, flashing 800 feet into the air, that they momentarily blinded the captain of the *Kashmir*, the third ship in line. He thought it was the ship ahead of his, the *Jupiter*, which had been blown up, and was under the impression he was still following his leader, the *Javelin*. This misunderstanding caused a short delay in the assumption



of command of the flotilla by the *Kashmir*, commanded by the next senior officer to Mountbatten.

The first torpedo, as has been stated, had blown off the bow of the *Javelin*, and the second, striking just abaft the engine-room, twisted her stern upward, so that she might have capsized had not the after magazine fortunately exploded and sheared the remnant off. What was left of the ship settled on an even keel.

By this time the remainder of the flotilla was in hot pursuit of the enemy, firing all guns that could be brought to bear, and four direct hits were scored before they disappeared behind an impenetrable white smoke-screen apparently laid down by *E*-boats. The chase was continued, but the British destroyers failed to re-establish contact with the enemy.

The *Javelin* was subjected to three low-level bombardments as she limped back to Plymouth, towed by two ocean-going tugs, but succeeded in reaching port, where Mountbatten went to the Commander-in-Chief to report and the *Javelin* went into dry-dock. He was extremely depressed by what had happened, not only because there had been many casualties in his ship's company, but also because, as he soon learned, he was being criticized by his fellow officers on account of the action. It was said he had engaged an inferior enemy force and not succeeded in defeating it. But an allegation far more serious was that Mountbatten had wilfully delayed fire for three minutes after the enemy had been sighted in order to manœuvre the flotilla into a more favourable position, although one of the elementary rules of destroyer tactics is to open fire at sight.

These criticisms were the subject of many gloomy discussions between Mountbatten and his staff—discussions in which they tried to reconstruct the action and decide what was done wrong that could have been better. The two principal reasons for the *Javelin* disaster emerging from this examination of the incident were the failure of communications and Mountbatten's lack of confidence in his radar. The breakdown of the wireless set aboard the *Javelin* made it very difficult for Mountbatten to keep in touch with the rest of his flotilla. When the destroyer flashes were first sighted he had signalled them to proceed in quarter line, a staggered formation, enabling a division to achieve greater speed than when proceeding in single line ahead. Experience has shown, however, that quarter line is not as useful a formation when communications are out of order, as it is impossible to turn on the line without considerable delay and difficulty, while single line ahead does not present the same problems. Because the extra speed gained by this formation had seemed to him more important than manœuvrability, when contact with the enemy was finally made, the flotilla had been out of formation at the critical moment when they were engaged; one of his destroyers, indeed, had been going in the wrong direction.

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As it happened, the reason why the range of the *Javelin's* guns was not correctly calculated was that Mountbatten had little faith in his radar, which, for a wonder, had indicated the correct distance of the enemy ships. It was not surprising, however, that he had little faith in the radar equipment then installed on destroyers, for the sets were primitive and makeshift and had been designed for use in aircraft. The screen attached to the mast looked rather like a miniature iron bedstead, while the set itself seemed to be nothing more impressive than a small black box. Besides, the machine was always breaking down or giving images of things that were not there. His early distrust was later overcome when, on a black night, the radar screen showed an undecipherable image. After Mountbatten had ordered his ship to approach the object shown on the screen, she moved forward to intercept, and suddenly flashed on a searchlight, discovering in its beam a small sailing vessel filled with French refugees trying to reach England. Mountbatten was doubly pleased by this incident when one of the Frenchmen said, "We knew we should be able to get through the German blockade, but we were also sure we could not get by the English."

Inexplicable, nevertheless, is the strength of the divergent opinions of many destroyer officers about the *Javelin* incident. I have been told that the escape of the German destroyers was the worst disgrace suffered in destroyer action during the war. By this action also Mountbatten acquired a reputation for complete recklessness. In the opinion of those officers serving with him at the time, the *Javelin* incident was chiefly the outcome of bad luck, and, under the circumstances, nobody could have done a better job. In any case, it is certain that so much damage was inflicted on the two heavy German destroyers that they were unable ever to undertake another raid from Brest.

Two days after the *Javelin* limped back to port Mountbatten went north to Hebburn to recommission his own flotilla leader, the *Kelly*, on which repairs had finally been completed. The Royal Navy was at this time expanding at a prodigious rate, and Mountbatten found that, of the 260 men selected for his crew, no fewer than 170 had never been to sea before. He was accompanied by Lady Louis and his daughters, Patricia and Pamela, who stayed with him for the next few days before the ship went to sea.

It had been arranged that the *Kelly* should go to the Fleet Base at Scapa Flow to "work up"—that is, to train her crew to work the guns, torpedo-tubes, fire-control system, and so forth—in short, to make her ready for war. On leaving the mouth of the Tyne at sunset in December 1940 the *Kelly* ran into a heavy North Sea swell, so that all the inexperienced members of the crew, and some of the old hands as well, were seasick.

Night fell, and a few hours later gun-flashes were sighted ahead near the coast. Mountbatten and his Flotilla Staff knew they must come from either British warships at gunnery practice or German destroyers attacking coastal shipping. Since the distance across the North Sea was so much greater than across the Channel, the second alternative seemed unlikely, unless the Germans were showing considerably more boldness than usual. However, when the flotilla "exercise" programmes and information which had been issued to them for the trip north were examined it was found that no British ships were scheduled to hold gunnery practice in the area under observation that night. The consensus of opinion was now, inevitably, that a surprise attack by German destroyers against coastal shipping was being executed. Mountbatten was in a very awkward quandary. Not one of his gun crews had ever been to sea before, and many of the men by this time were almost helplessly seasick. To go into action with a sick and entirely untrained crew was to court almost certain disaster. On the other hand, he had already been preaching to the new crew his own doctrine, "Always steer towards the sound of the guns." Too many of the ship's company had seen the gun-flashes. The rumour that it might well be the enemy was running through the ship like wildfire. To turn back would be to strike a perhaps fatal blow at morale on this, the occasion of the crew's very first experience at sea; yet to go on was to take a tremendous risk should the gun-flashes prove to come from the enemy.

Mountbatten did not hesitate. He ordered the engine-room to produce as much speed as the new hands could get out of the ship, and sent round experienced officers and petty officers to explain to the gun crews how to load the guns, so that at least one salvo could be fired with a chance of success.

Fortunately, it was found out later that a British destroyer had, in fact, obtained special permission to hold night practice and that this information had not reached the *Kelly*; but the feeling that they would have gone in to attack the enemy at all costs had a profound effect on the morale of her crew throughout her commission.

Shortly afterwards he was ordered to sail to Portsmouth; but when the flotilla arrived they were ordered to leave immediately for the Mediterranean, where the situation at the time was desperate. The Axis forces were advancing in North Africa. Hitler had undertaken also an offensive in Greece, where he was dissatisfied with the slow Italian progress, and was successfully bringing to a close a brilliant offensive in which he had speedily rolled back all opposition. Now that Greece had all but fallen, the enemy would have airfields on both sides of the Mediterranean and make it impossible for Allied shipping to supply the troops that were being thrust ever backwards across the

deserts to the south. Mountbatten was told in confidence that he must be prepared to fight a rearguard action.

With the conviction that many of his men would not see England again for some time, if ever, he insisted that he could not leave until the boilers had been cleaned, and so managed to delay departure for four days. When he returned to his ship after securing this delay he made a speech in which he said that the *Kelly* would be leaving England, and that he had fought to get two days' leave for each watch, four days in all. He also said he was using the short respite to get the vessel fitted with Oerlikon guns.

Finally, on the fourth day, after the return of second watch and a farewell cocktail-party, the *Kelly*, in company with the *Kipling*, the *Kashmir* and the *Jersey*, steamed out of the harbour, heading for the Mediterranean. To all who remembered them it seemed like a lifetime since those days before the war when they looked forward to going to the Mediterranean with no more deadly duty in view than the endless friendly competition between the 5th Flotilla and the flotilla led by the late Captain Warburton-Lee, who had lost his life in H.M.S. *Hardy* at Narvik.

The general gloom all felt on the trip out was caused only by premonition until they arrived at the entrance of the Grand Harbour at Valetta. Though the cliffs round the harbour and the stone jetties—or, at least, what was left of them—were swarming with Maltese dressed in their customary black, waving and wildly cheering the flotilla, Mountbatten was appalled at the destruction inflicted even on the strongly built town of Valetta itself. Whole streets had been turned into rubble, while the harbour was a mass of wreckage. The Maltese, suffering from starvation, moved nervously to and fro, their faces drawn with fear and suffering, looking, in their black rags, like the subjects depicted in Goya's etchings of the "Miseries of War".

It was not long before Mountbatten and his men learned what a hell the island had become, for almost every day it was subjected to heavy bombing by the Germans. The rear-admiral in command of destroyers had ruled that during air-raids all ships' companies were to take shelter in the caves in the cliff face, leaving only a skeleton crew aboard, including the crew of one anti-aircraft gun. Mountbatten, however, would never leave his vessel, though he insisted his men should.

Sometimes, in periods not assigned to nightly sweeps or to intercepting convoys between Benghazi and Tobruk, he could get some relaxation at the motion pictures in Sliema or riding on the Marsa polo field; but most of the time was spent gloomily enough. Practically everybody was suffering from battle strain. A feeling was not unprevailing on the island that it would be better to let the Germans have Malta.

Even Fate itself seemed to be playing on the enemy's side. One day the British submarine *Cachalot* arrived in port. She had been long expected from England, supposedly bringing boxes of spare parts and ammunition for the Oerlikon guns with which Mountbatten had had his ships fitted, as well as a box of tennis-balls for the Governor. The tennis-balls arrived, but when the boxes of spare parts were opened it was found that by some curious oversight they were empty. To add to disappointment came sadness at the news that the *Cachalot* had been sunk on the return trip.

Early in May 1941, about a month after the 5th Flotilla had arrived, they were ordered to carry out one of their most difficult assignments, the shelling of Benghazi. A month earlier the port had fallen to the enemy, and it was soon evident they were going to make good use of it. It was essential, therefore, to put it out of commission so that the enemy could not use it to supply their advancing forces in North Africa. The Royal Air Force had raided it on several occasions, but as they had had to attack it at night they had been unable to do much damage to the shipping in the harbour.

The night before the available destroyers of the 5th Flotilla—the *Kelly*, the *Kashmir*, the *Kelvin*, the *Jackal*, the *Kipling*, and the *Jupiter*—had been scheduled to bombard the town and harbour, it had been subjected to a more than usually severe air attack. Naturally, Mountbatten and his staff expected the men manning the defences would be more than usually on the alert. It was midnight when the flotilla steamed swiftly towards Benghazi under a brilliant starlit sky. As they came in sight of it the officers on the bridge of the *Kelly* could see only the spire of the cathedral and the tip of the lighthouse projecting above a bank of mist shrouding the harbour and the town beyond.

Mountbatten's task was to destroy the shipping in the harbour, protected on two sides by high breakwaters, by leading his flotilla in at an angle into the very mouth of the anchorage on the only side on which it was not protected. Once inside, the flotilla must fire their shells as fast as possible and steam off before the garrison of the town had been aroused and the coastal defences manned. To execute this manoeuvre effectively, with sufficient dispatch to ensure safety, the guns of the flotilla must be already trained so they could open fire accurately, as soon as they came within range, at the narrow mouth of the harbour. It was going to be a precise manoeuvre, difficult to execute.

Mountbatten's navigator told him that he was unable to establish their position with absolute accuracy by taking observations of the tower and lighthouse. As it was essential to know this if the bombardment was to be really effective, Mountbatten decided to risk a "dummy run" right into the mouth of the harbour. The risk was great, for if they were detected the whole operation would be ruined; but it had to be taken,

as this was the only way to ensure the effectiveness of the bombardment. The flotilla steamed to the southward at twelve knots, turned almost in the mouth of the harbour and, when the navigator had ascertained its exact position, re-formed outside. As soon as the ships were disposed on the correct line of approach they advanced again towards the narrow entrance of Benghazi harbour at twelve knots, their guns blazing. The port was flooded with the light of orange flame as 100 high-powered shells per minute poured down on the ships lying peacefully at anchor and on the nearby quays.

The flotilla started to turn as it came abreast of the outer breakwater, but just as they did so and the cease-fire order had been given, two batteries on the breakwater opened fire. Fortunately they failed to score any hits as the ships sped out to sea at thirty knots under cover of a heavy smoke-screen.

As the ships ploughed across the starlit sea, beyond the land fog enemy aircraft were heard overhead, but the bombs which they dropped failed to find their targets. Mountbatten ordered the flotilla to fall into loose formation, drop smoke-floats, zigzag, and increase speed. The bombing attacks continued sporadically for the next two hours, but without causing any damage, and as dawn lightened into morning the 5th Flotilla steamed into the Grand Harbour of Malta after effectively completing their mission—the paralysing of all shipping in the port of Benghazi.

Unfortunately, there was to be no let-up. In those days the flotilla scarcely remained in port long enough to refuel. In Greece, to the north, the situation was rapidly turning into a catastrophe. The token force sent by the British to help defend Hellas against the Germans had to be evacuated to North Africa. Scarcely had the last convoy of troops landed in North Africa than it became evident the Germans meant to take advantage of their newly constructed airfields in Greece to capture Crete. Later, however, President Roosevelt told a friend of mine that the waste of men and material in this British defence of Greece and Crete had apparently saved Suez by checking the Germans in employing the old Russian strategy of tossing the babies to the wolves to save the horses.

There were gloomy predictions of a combined sea and airborne landing in Crete, supported by the full, though dubious, strength of the Italian Navy and the German and Italian Air Forces. An effective defence would have required the full strength of the Army supported by the Navy and the Air Force, to provide adequate fighter protection. This last and most important requirement was not available, so the support of the Army in Crete became the responsibility of the Navy almost unaided.

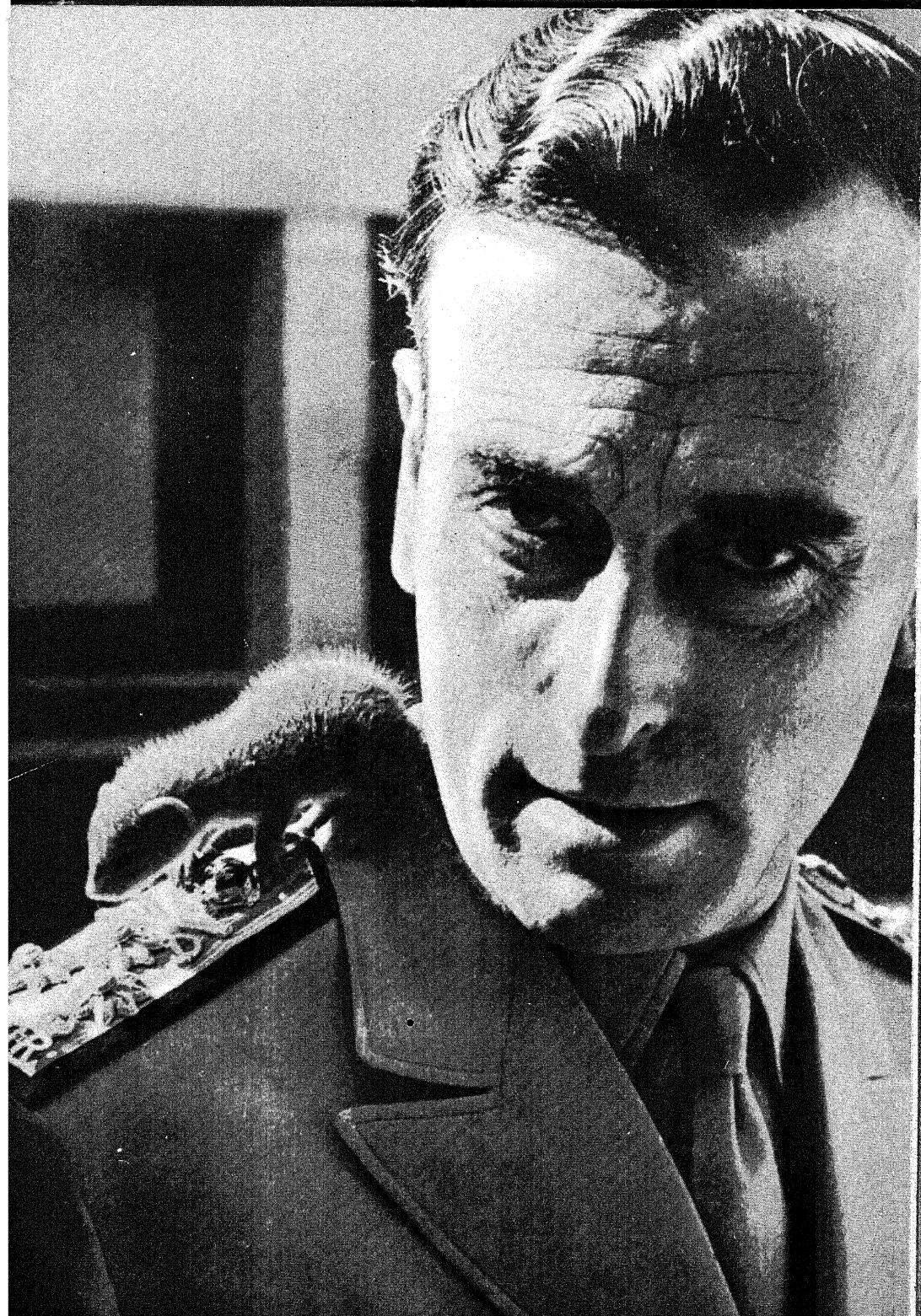
On the afternoon of May 21, Lord Louis returned aboard the *Kelly* after a conference on shore with his commanding officers. As soon as

he arrived he ordered the ship's company to fall in on the break of the fo'c'sle and told them of the job ahead. They stood listening to him, dressed in white shorts and singlets, and edging as far as possible into what little shade there was available as protection from the blazing Mediterranean sun. He said that British losses in Crete were becoming greater and greater and that it was the Navy's task to prevent any enemy soldiers, tanks, equipment or supplies from crossing that narrow strip of water separating the coast of Nazi-held Greece from Crete. He added that this would entail spending many hours without fighter protection within easy range of the German airfields, on which was based a large part of the *Luftwaffe*. They would doubtless be bombed by Junker 87s and 88s, by Heinkel 3s and even by Messerschmitts, and strafed by machine-guns. When these 'planes had finished dropping one load of bombs and had used up their ammunition and fuel for the fray, they could return to their adjacent airfields and shortly resume the attack. He finished by saying they had served with him long enough to know that every man would live up to his, Mountbatten's, and his fellow officers' expectations.

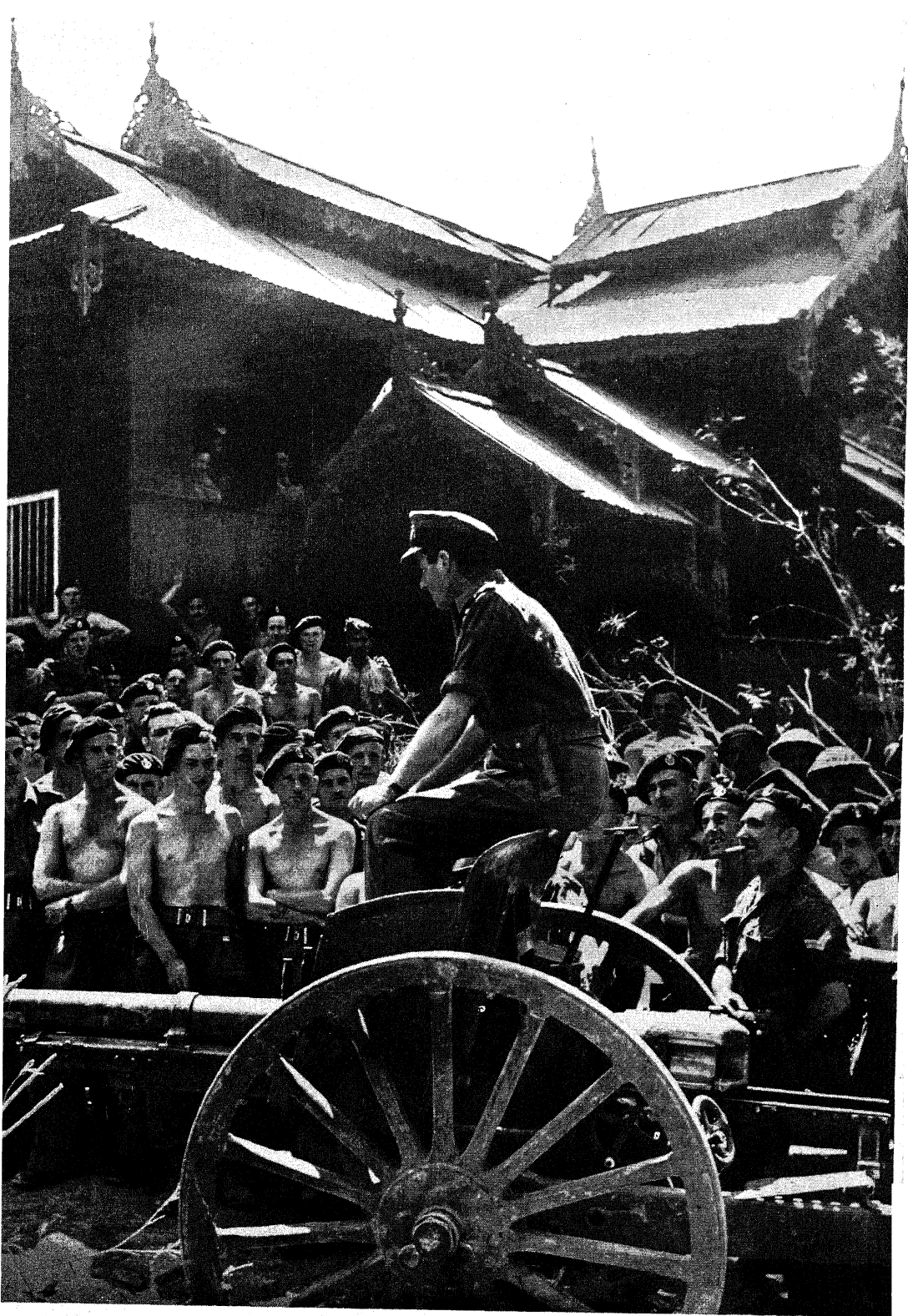
That evening the *Kelly* sailed out of the Grand Harbour, leading the *Kashmir*, *Kipling*, *Kelvin*, and *Jackal*, and headed towards Crete. On the same day one British cruiser had been sunk and the Germans had gained a foothold on Crete with parachute troops; but that very evening the British naval force which Mountbatten was to join made contact with the enemy and managed to overpower the first convoy of seaborne German troops bound for Crete, sending the entire force to the bottom.

Dawn broke crystal clear over the smooth Mediterranean the following morning, bringing the certainty of attack to the 5th Flotilla sailing in single line ahead at top speed towards the north. The anti-aircraft lookouts had been doubled in preparation for what lay ahead. At nine the first aircraft was reported off the starboard quarter, but it proved to be only a float-plane shadowing the flotilla, flying low and beyond gun range. Half an hour later a submarine's conning-tower was sighted at about 500 yards' distance. The flotilla immediately pursued it, but it had submerged before they arrived within range. The Asdic gear reported its whereabouts, however, and fifty depth-charges were dropped. Mountbatten, believing he had sunk it, wanted to remain in the area until some oil appeared on the surface, but he received orders by radio from Admiral Cunningham, Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean, to join the Fleet at the Kithera Channel off Crete without further delay.

With the evening came a high-level attack from Dornier 17s, but all their bombs missed. Ever since they had been at sea Mountbatten had not left the bridge. That evening for dinner he was served his customary meal of bread, sliced no less than an inch thick, and sardines,







which he invariably ate from the tin. He told his staff officers on the bridge that the situation looked pretty black, but that above all the morale of the ship's company must be maintained. Later that evening he received orders by radio to proceed, in company with the *Kashmir* and *Kipling*, to the spot where the cruiser *Fiji* was sinking, in order to help the *Kandahar* rescue survivors. The *Fiji* had been part of a force which had fought all day to resist another attempt at invasion. Both she and the cruiser *Gloucester* had been subjected to repeated dive-bomber attacks throughout the day and both were finally sunk, their ammunition almost exhausted but their guns still blazing skyward.

No sooner had the *Kelly* arrived on the scene than Mountbatten received orders to abandon the search and patrol the north-western coast of the island to intercept any enemy attempts to land in that area. The *Kelvin* and *Jackal* were also ordered to rejoin the flotilla.

When they all arrived in the Kithera Channel the *Kipling* signalled the *Kelly* that she had developed a steering defect which would take some time to repair, and that she would be able to proceed at high speed only if turns were avoided. Mountbatten was reluctant to wait for the *Kipling*, for he had just received new orders from General Freyberg to proceed at top speed to the port of Maleme, where German airborne troops had managed to secure a position, so he signalled the *Kipling* to rejoin the battle fleet to the south-west as soon as she could make repairs, ending, "We will go ahead and bombard ourselves"—meaning, of course, "bombard Maleme ourselves". Later, at Alexandria, Admiral Cunningham twitted Mountbatten about this signal, stating that in his long naval career he had never been able to effect such a manœuvre and asking Mountbatten for instructions as to how it was to be done.

While they were bombarding Maleme, the radar equipment on the *Kelly* picked up two *caiques*, Greek fishing-boats which the Germans were using as troop transports, sneaking towards the coast under cover of darkness to reinforce the paratroops who were now engaged in trying to take the Maleme airfield. The *Kelly* and *Kashmir* sped towards them, each singling out one of the craft, and promptly sank them. The first *caique* was loaded with German soldiers, who, with their ship aflame, leapt overboard in full heavy equipment. The other was loaded with ammunition which, after she was set afire, immediately exploded with terrific detonations in sheets of flame which lighted up the warm black night. The German airborne troops watching from shore, furious at seeing their reinforcements and new supplies of ammunition destroyed before their eyes, radioed imperative messages to their bombers to sink the destroyers which had done the damage.

Just as dawn began to shimmer on the horizon, Mountbatten handed a radio message from Admiral Cunningham, Commander-in-

Chief of the British Naval Forces in the Mediterranean, ordering all forces to retire to Alexandria forthwith. Mountbatten was overheard to say: "Thank God! This is the order I have been waiting for." Daylight had just appeared. There were two courses open, both of them pretty dangerous. One was to head independently for the west, the other to rejoin the Fleet to the south.

Mountbatten decided the second course was best, as by keeping close to shore he could remain at the greatest distance possible from the aerodromes of Crete.

At six o'clock the alarm was given, "Aircraft bearing off port bow." This was the beginning of the end of this phase of the air attack on the ships. Two waves of bombers came over, but as they carried only troop-harassing bombs they could not do much damage.

At eight, a large formation of German dive-bombers appeared. They split up into formations of three and began swooping down, dropping their bombs and soaring into the sky again preparatory to making another attack. By this time both ships were shuddering with the recoil of pom-poms, 4.7 Oerlikons, and machine-guns. The third German wave managed to hit the *Kashmir* amidships with a 1,000-lb. bomb. Two minutes later she went down with her guns still firing. During these two minutes one of her gunners, an Australian, was seen, after his gun had been submerged, crawling over the wreckage to another gun, with which he opened fire on an attacking aircraft and shot it down. He was subsequently awarded the medal for conspicuous gallantry.

Now the Germans concentrated their entire force on the *Kelly*, which was steaming at thirty knots under full starboard rudder. No sooner had Mountbatten finished shouting over the loudspeaker, "Whatever happens, keep the guns firing!" than there was a deafening roar astern as a 1,000-lb. bomb landed abaft the engine-room. All Mountbatten could see was flying debris from the explosion. The ship's sideplates were wrenched open by the sea as she listed more and more sharply to starboard. As she capsized, fifty seconds after being hit, the men were swept from their gun-stations by the force of the rushing water. Not one man left his post in the engine-room until after she had completely turned over, but fortunately an airlock had been formed, so many were finally able to escape. The last foothold that Mountbatten had as he leapt from the bridge was, by a curious coincidence, his own invention, the station-keeping gear.

The *Kelly* floated upside down for about half an hour while the survivors of the disaster, bobbing round in the sea and coated with heavy oil pouring from the sinking ship, hung on to broken wreckage or Carley floats. The Germans, not satisfied to leave the scene of the sinking, flew back and forth across the water low enough to machine-gun

## THE WHITE ENSIGN

the defenceless survivors. Three and a half hours later the *Kipling*, now repaired, arrived on the scene and lowered her boats to pick up survivors, despite the fact that she was repeatedly subjected to air attack.

As soon as Mountbatten boarded the *Kipling* he gave orders that all possible survivors were to be picked up. Actually, about a third of the ship's company was saved. As it was essential for the *Kipling* to leave the area at the earliest moment, in order not to endanger herself further, it was possible a few might have been overlooked, so Mountbatten radioed a request to Admiral Cunningham to send a flying-boat to rescue any that might still remain.

The rest of the day was a nightmare. The *Kipling* was attacked, this time by high-level bombardment instead of by dive-bombers, and this was far more dangerous. Mountbatten radioed for air support, but the situation was then so bad that none was available. Eventually the *Kipling* managed to steam into Alexandria without further accident, although she had had several narrow scrapes. She was met on the dock by members of the Naval Hospital staff, who were there to take off the wounded.

Several days later Mountbatten received instructions to fly back to England to prepare for another appointment. However, before leaving, in a speech to the survivors of the *Kelly*, who were living in a warehouse serving as temporary barracks, he said:

"I have come to say good-bye to the few of you who are left. We have had so many talks, but this is our last. . . . I have always tried to crack a joke or two before, and you have all been friendly and laughed at them. But today I am afraid I have run out of jokes, and I don't suppose any of us feel much like laughing. The *Kelly* has been in one scrap after another—but even when we have had men killed the majority survived and brought the old ship back. Now she lies in fifteen hundred fathoms and with her more than half our shipmates. If they had to die, what a grand way to go, for now they lie all together with the ship we loved, and they are in very good company. We have lost her, but they are still with her. There may be less than half the *Kelly* left,\* but I feel that each of us will take up the battle with even stronger heart. Each of us knows twice as much about fighting, and each of us has twice as good a reason to fight. You will all be sent to replace men who have been killed in other ships, and the next time you are in action remember the *Kelly*. As you ram each shell home into the gun, shout, '*Kelly!*' and so her spirit will go on inspiring us until victory is won. I should like to add that there isn't one of you that I wouldn't be proud and honoured to serve with again. Good-bye, good luck, and thank you all from the bottom of my heart."

## LAST VICEROY

Soon after he had said good-bye he returned to England by air.

Since the beginning of the war there had been many changes in his domestic life. Just before its outbreak he and his family had given up their penthouse and moved to a small and unpretentious house in Chester Street. This proved to be a prescient move, for during the first two years of the war their old habitation was struck by two bombs. At the same time Lady Louis arranged to have "Broadlands" converted into a 100-bed hospital for convalescents, keeping only a small wing for her family.

Lady Louis had not only shorn herself of two lavish establishments but had also, like her husband, devoted her time entirely to the war effort. She threw herself as wholeheartedly into these activities as she had once done with those attending the pleasures of riches, beauty and fashion. When her husband went to sea in the first month of the war it was in this spirit that she joined the St. John Ambulance Brigade, a British voluntary organization very similar to, and associated with, the Red Cross. Although she had had very little experience in organization (other than for such events as charity balls), she was appointed head of the St. John Ambulance personnel, working with the air-raid precautions services operating in the London area in October 1940. The personnel included members working in first-aid posts, in medical-aid posts attached to public air-raid shelters, and in rest centres provided to give temporary shelter to bombed-out families. Lady Louis herself worked in these during the six months of mass raids, and at the same time undertook nursing duties to gain actual hospital experience.

When she was given the assignment she was solemnly admonished it was not one she could accept if she did not propose to work. Little did those who appointed her realize how hard she would work or how brilliantly perform her duties. Her industry was such that, soon afterwards, she was appointed Superintendent-in-Chief of all the nursing divisions of St. John Ambulance, and, as such, was placed in charge of 60,000 adult nursing members and 40,000 nursing cadets.

On arriving in London, Mountbatten was granted a month's leave awaiting reassignment to the command of the aircraft-carrier *Illustrious*, which was then being repaired under Lend-Lease in the Norfolk Navy Yard in Virginia. At the same time his wife also had to fly to the United States, on behalf of both the British Red Cross and St. John Ambulance Association, to thank all those personally who had been responsible for collecting the £5,000,000-worth of Red Cross supplies sent to Britain during the previous two years of the war, and they arranged to travel by the same plane.

On the way over Mountbatten coached his wife in public speaking, for during her coming tour she would have to give almost a thousand

"informal talks" at various meetings. Hitherto she had had no experience in this mysterious and terrifying art. She was adjudged, in the general opinion of the audiences before whom she spoke during that tour and those before whom she has spoken subsequently, one of the finest and most fluent women speakers they had ever heard. Whether this was due to her husband's training, or the natural ability she inherited from her father, an adept in the art of debate, I do not know.

The Mountbattens arrived in New York with two weeks' leave remaining before Lady Louis had to start on her tour and Lord Louis to take up his duties in Norfolk. They took this opportunity to visit their old friend Mrs. Vanderbilt, in Newport, and to spend a short time at the Waldorf, in New York, seeing other old friends.

While in Newport, Mountbatten again met Antoine Gazda, who was manufacturing Oerlikon guns in the United States and working on another invention of his, a sixty-knot *E*-boat fighter to be carried aboard coastal convoy steamers. As soon as he was told about the new invention, Lord Louis wrote a letter to his friend Peter du Cane, designer of the first successful motor torpedo-boat, suggesting that he meet Gazda and that the two combine their efforts, as he did not believe it was possible for an inventor to design a boat which would be really useful in action unless he had had years of experience in boat-building. Even while vacationing at Newport he did not miss an opportunity to make constructive suggestions where matters that involved the welfare of his Service were concerned.

Later, in New York, Lord and Lady Louis gave several parties for their old friends, but they were not as startling and splendid as the affairs of the pre-war era. Informality and discretion marked these small gatherings.

A well-known author, whom they had known for many years, was invited to one of their parties, and a story not above suspicion has been told about the occasion. He had met them before he became a refugee from the French Riviera. Not knowing the change that had come over them, still believing them to be the gay, bright young people he had known at the Ritz in Paris and at Antibes, he thought they would be amused to meet a burlesque variety queen. She was greeted by a glacial glance from Lady Mountbatten. Some of the men may have given her *two* glacial glances. Finally, as the guests were about to walk in to dinner, the strippeuse, sensing the fall in temperature, swung her wrap over her shoulders and, as she passed her hostess on her way out, said, "Tell me, Lady Mountbatten, can I borrow your face sometime to crack my ice?" The author's guest had not been a success, and he returned to his country home still more annoyed with city slickers.

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But parties, those small oases, were rare on this trip, for Mountbatten was spending most of his time at Norfolk supervising the repair of the *Illustrious*. On one of his inspection tours he suffered his first wound of the war. Some people in Norfolk had heard that it is customary for ships to have mascots, so they decided, therefore, that the so-far-mascotless *Illustrious* should be no exception. The mascot finally chosen was a handsome, bearded, and belligerent goat, who some thought, bore a resemblance to George Bernard Shaw. The goat, on first seeing Mountbatten's gold braid, seems to have been moved by that primal instinct which drives a bull to dash at any bright, moving object. The goat charged his future Commander, but, instead of butting him, bit him, tearing one section out of his trousers and another out of his skin. The effect of this wound did not prove fatal.

Not long afterwards, Admiral Stark, United States Chief of Naval Staff, invited Mountbatten to fly to Pearl Harbour to inspect the naval installations and give his opinion of what he saw as an experienced commanding officer with battle experience. On his way out Mountbatten stopped in Los Angeles and visited Walt Disney's studios, where he was shown round by another naval officer, Lieutenant Douglas Fairbanks, son of the old friend in whose house he and his wife had stayed on their honeymoon twenty years before. Mountbatten was very impressed by the cartoons, posters, and insignia that Disney was making for the American defence programme. Disney was in South America at the time, but he asked the staff of the studio if they would not design an emblem for the *Illustrious*. In compliance with this request a design was made showing Donald Duck in the uniform of an admiral, with large epaulettes and plumes, standing in a pond pushing a toy aircraft-carrier with one foot and lifting an aeroplane from the deck with the other. But before the design was completed Mountbatten continued his flight to Pearl Harbour.

After inspecting the installations there, he freely gave it as his opinion that the defences were quite inadequate. "Why," said he, "even the communication wires of the fighter control system are run above ground." His visit to Honolulu was cut short by a "most immediate" message from the Admiralty directing him to return to London as quickly as possible to take up an appointment, the nature of which was secret.

He stopped off in Washington on his precipitate return flight only long enough to see Admiral Stark. Stark joked with him about his suggestions for the improvement of the defences of Pearl Harbour, and said, "I am afraid putting some of your recommendations into effect is going to make your visit out there an expensive one for the Navy." For in the Navy Department's mind there was not so much as the shadow of a suspicion of what was to happen three months later after a solitary

American aircraft sighted squadron after squadron of Japanese 'planes flying through the dawn.

In London, the sudden cancellation of Mountbatten's appointment to the command of the *Illustrious*, and the appearance of the mysterious letter M after his name in the Admiralty lists, meaning "nature of appointment secret", aroused considerable conjecture. Those in the "know" said that Churchill had planned something very big for "Dickie", but nobody seemed sure just exactly what. Indeed, there were even some who believed the fantastic rumour that he was to be named First Lord of the Admiralty.



## CHAPTER V

### THE FATHER OF D-DAY?

TODAY, if you were to walk down Whitehall, the heart of official London, you would see a palatial residence with a terrace, quoins, pediments, a mansard roof and long, dirty french windows, for the house, once residence of the Dukes of Buccleuch, is now deserted.

If, however, a German spy had walked down Whitehall in the winter of 1942, as many may well have, he might have observed that this house was the focus of a great deal of activity which would have seemed to him undirected and inexplicable. If he had paused a moment on the pavement, he might have noted a young man, wearing on his sleeve the broad stripe of a commodore, leap out of a car and disappear into the rear entrance, followed directly by his senior in age, dressed in old clothes with a bald head and a goatee. Soon he might have seen these figures followed, first by one who seemed to be an American movie actor in the uniform of a naval lieutenant, then by an obviously famous and fabulously rich industrialist in the uniform of a major-general, and finally by an American major whose self-important strut suggested that he had formerly been one of Sam Goldwyn's press agents.

The spy might well have wished to investigate further in order to find out what all these men were doing in the same building. Why, these were as mixed a lot as the men who had started the Nazi party with Hitler! They would bear watching! If the spy was able to whip out the necessary credentials to get by the guard at the entrance (as he probably was) he must have been still more deeply mystified by what was going on inside. In walking down a corridor he might first have passed a room in which men, who seemed to be grown-ups, were standing around a table littered with model houses, surrounded by model shrubbery, standing on model terrain, while on shelves around the walls were model boats, model tanks, model aeroplanes, and even model men and model rifles. With these, the men around the table were, to all appearances, playing solemn games. In the next room he might have found several men listening in hushed and reverential silence to a recording device playing a record that made as many dissonances as a Chinese orchestra, but if he listened carefully he must have distinguished the noise of clanking chains, the sound of men, the screams of mortar shells, and the distant, shattering roar of heavy artillery. At this point the spy may well have suspected that he was suffering from war neurosis.

In all parts of the British Isles an infinite number of seemingly un-

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related and invariably mysterious activities were observable and all of these activities seemed to be directed from the former ducal residence in Whitehall. From that building came Cambridge and Oxford dons dressed as naval officers, and naval officers dressed as dons. Indeed, it must have been enough to make the spy come to the same conclusion as that reached by many of the old blimps sitting in their club windows, namely that the building in Whitehall was the only lunatic asylum in England run by its own inmates.

The house in question was the headquarters of Combined (i.e. sea, air, and land) Operations, the organization created by Winston Churchill to solve the problem of reconquering the continent of Europe.

After Dunkirk, Churchill had made a speech in which he had said, "We will fight on the beaches." As he said it, he must have realized that it would be necessary to fight again on the beaches of France, but this time in the rôle of attacker, not defender. For, at the time of Dunkirk, Britain was faced from the borders of Spain to the northern boundaries of Norway with a hostile coast, when she had scarcely a division to defend her entire Island, when day after day hundreds of 'planes were pouring down bombs on her cities, when a heavy night attack might have proved irresistible. Churchill certainly realized that some day Britain must be prepared to return to the Continent.

But the second front could not be begun in a year, or two years, even with the support of America and her enormous potential of production. In the years, however many they might be, before sufficient forces could be built up and before Germany could be sufficiently weakened to make an invasion of the Continent possible, it was obvious to him that the conquered peoples of Europe must have encouragement in order to prepare and maintain a political base against the day when the invasion actually was effected. Most Continental nations felt, as Mussolini did, that Britain had been defeated, hopelessly and completely, after Dunkirk, and that Hitler had succeeded in doing what the Kaiser had set out to do, that is, subject the whole Continent to his control. They were more prepared to hear that German troops had landed in England than that British troops had landed in Europe.

There were, of course, many elements in the conquered areas ready to risk themselves, their homes and their families, in support of a British landing. If Europe was to be liberated, these were the groups that needed moral support. They needed some tangible sign that the hell of existence under Nazi domination would some day come to an end, that it was not a hell of eternal punishment. These people must be inspired to assassinate German soldiers, destroy German communications, sabotage German production, and above all make the Germans feel they did not possess the lands of France and Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria, so that they

would have to spread themselves thinly over the conquered territories to keep them in subjection. This would tie up an inestimable number of German troops and keep them from engaging in active combat against the Allies.

If the conquered peoples of Europe needed encouragement, so did the still unconquered people of Britain. They had been forced out of Norway, forced out of France, they had been unable to give sufficient assistance to Greece, they had lost Crete. Their armies in North Africa had been hurled back beyond the borders of Egypt. From August through September 1941 they had been subjected to air attacks night and day, during which 2,375 German 'planes had been shot down. For the next nine months they had endured nightly bombings. London had been raided on eighty-two out of eighty-five consecutive nights, and 100,000 people were either killed or wounded. Then Japan had entered the war, swept through French Indo-China and Siam down into Malaya, over into the Netherlands East Indies and across into Burma. In five short months she had conquered all the territory that lay between China and India. Britain was now defeated almost everywhere, on land, sea, and in the air.

What she needed more than anything was the feeling that she was not defeated quite everywhere, that in some dimension of warfare she was on the offensive and was beating the Germans on their own ground. Churchill saw the answer in the development of an organization designed to make small raids along the enemy's coast, extending from Biarritz to Vadsö. Small forces could strike the enemy where he was least prepared, and before he could put his superior but divided strength in the field the invader would be gone. Such raids would serve as tangible evidence to the conquered nations on the Continent that Britain could attack the enemy at will along her extensive coastline, and would some day be on the offensive again, making landings, not as isolated raids, but as part of a larger plan, and, more important still, they would convince the British people, too, that some offensive action against the enemy was being undertaken.

Most important of all, however, these operations would serve as an experimental laboratory for the study of the most difficult and complicated field in the art and science of warfare: the invasion of a defended shore by sea. Practically nothing was known about either the tactics or the material needed, and history had recorded few instances of a successful conclusion to such an undertaking. The only one in recent times had been the capture of Quebec by the British in 1758. In World War I there had been the terrible disaster of Gallipoli, where Britain had suffered her greatest single strategic defeat. Strangely enough, Churchill, in his position as First Lord of the Admiralty, had been directly responsible for the strategy which led to the defeat. It was Gallipoli more than any

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other incident which brought about his retirement from his post as First Lord. The only period in history during which the technique of landing on a defended beach became really efficient was when the buccaneers of the Spanish Main made it a practice to land from a ship only after she had continued the offshore bombardment of a seaboard town for a sufficient length of time to reduce the better part of its inhabitants to a state of willing acquiescence to surrender. Enough time had elapsed since those days to let the War Office forget such basic principles as that many small shells soften up beach defences more effectively than a few large ones. As any such operation was rare and unorthodox, beach operations in general were forgotten by most of those people responsible for dividing up the scraps thrown to the Services in the way of peace-time budget allocations. Indeed, after World War I the study of Combined Operations was limited to Staff College exercises, and the one British landing-craft in existence was given little thought except by bathers, who wrote letters to responsible officials objecting violently to this strange craft which scored deep indentations in their beaches. The five years before World War II saw the number of landing-craft increase in direct proportion to the increase of the danger of war. The size of the Fleet grew from one to ten, and a special sub-committee of the Deputy Chiefs of Staff Committee was appointed to investigate the use of landing-craft. This committee was referred to, if at all, as the I.S.T.D.C., which, if you bothered to investigate the initials, was found to stand for the Inter-Service Training and Development Centre.

With the outbreak of hostilities the I.S.T.D.C. was, of course, disbanded as being far too great a luxury for a nation at war, but after two months it was re-established. At Dunkirk the thirteen landing-craft then in existence were put to good use. The four which escaped being sunk by the shells and bombs of the Germans proved their value by evacuating 2,000 troops during three terrible days.

In 1940, when Britain was defeated, according to the Germans, and Churchill was casting about for an ultimate way to return to the Continent founded on an interim objective of raids against the enemy coast, he used the I.S.T.D.C. as the nucleus of a Combined Operations organization. At the top there was a director to advise the heads of the three Services on the creation of such an organization, on the tactics and material (ships, craft and equipment) necessary for its operations, and on the planning of raids on the enemy coast. This ambitious project was based, in the way of fighting personnel, on six independent companies, ten commando companies, and the promise of a small force of parachutists still to be trained by the Air Ministry.

Churchill asked for immediate results and he got them. Scarcely a month after Dunkirk the first raid was staged against the coast of France

by a force of 120 men. The original craft scheduled for this operation broke down, so several launches borrowed from the Air Force were used instead. On the trip over they were strafed by British fighters, who fortunately proved their inexperience by missing them, but something also happened which was far more serious: it became obvious that the compasses on the launches were unreliable. The results of the expedition were summed up by the Deputy Director of Combined Operations, "We staged the raid without casualties although practically nobody landed at the place they were supposed to."

Historically speaking, this raid was the direct ancestor of D-Day, but about the same relation existed between ancestor and descendant as between a globule of primeval protoplasm and Einstein. Nevertheless it was a beginning, and a period of steady if almost imperceptible evolutionary development followed it. Churchill decided to give the organization prestige by appointing the ageing hero of the Dardanelles and Zeebrugge, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes, as the new Director of Combined Operations. No sooner was he appointed than Churchill instructed him to begin organizing immediately "two or three raids of between five and ten thousand troops to take place in a couple of months". This directive was more in the nature of a grandiose opium dream than the result of a close examination of facts. The Admiral informed Churchill that the forces then at his disposal did not permit him to envisage operations on such a scale, but that he would initiate measures to assemble adequate forces and equipment. A moment better calculated for refusal could not have been chosen. The Admiralty were in a panic as the submarine menace grew and the blue pins on their charts, indicating the movements of shipping, became fewer daily. The Air Ministry were in a cold sweat as more and more German 'planes came over in each daily raid. The War Office were contemplating with a shudder of fear their forces equal to less than one division for the defence of Britain. This was not the time to divert vital supplies and men for one of Churchill's hobbies!

Keyes' repeated requests for men and material were met with polite indifference and inertia on the part of the established Service Ministries. But he was not to be stopped. If no success could be achieved by orthodox means, then the material required must be obtained by unorthodox methods. Most effective among these was "moonlight requisitioning" or benevolent looting. Over the next few months, against great if not universal opposition, Keyes, with the active support of Churchill, caused the production of landing-craft to be increased. He also gathered enough personnel and equipment together to carry out several sample raids that could be put down to the credit of "success achieved, causing some worry to the enemy but no great material damage done".

As Combined Operations headquarters expanded, relations between

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Keyes and the Chiefs of Staff Committee became strained. While he thought he should be considered by the Chiefs of Staff as Churchill's deputy for all Combined Operations, they, on their side, felt that he should not be assigned responsibility for raids involving over five thousand men. By September 1941 this conflict between the Chiefs of Staff and the Director resulted in more and more stormy sessions. The Chiefs of Staff finally submitted a proposal recommending that operations committing more than five thousand men be under the direction of a joint planning staff and that Keyes' title be changed from Director of Combined Operations to Adviser for Combined Operations, a title implying a perpetual bureaucratic stalemate. Keyes had a strong notion of his importance and capabilities, so he said that, given his new status, he could do no less than resign, as he promptly did.

Churchill was now faced with the necessity of finding somebody else to appoint as head of Combined Operations, someone who could, by his prestige and the strength of his personality, keep Combined Operations from being lost in the shuffle of Ministries and events.

The Directorate was definitely the Cinderella of its older sisters, the Chiefs of Staff Committee, but it had its fairy godmother in the robust person of Churchill. The real fight that had developed between Keyes and the Committee arose from the fact that Keyes and Churchill were in the habit of getting together and deciding to initiate an operation which appealed to them both without considering its relation to the general conduct of the war. This so irritated the Chiefs of Staff that they determined strictly to define and limit Keyes' powers. It was for them to direct the prosecution of the war, and not for two men, even if one of them was the Prime Minister, to go off at a tangent to stage a little private war of their own.

In looking around for somebody who would be sufficiently stubborn not to give way to the weight of perpetual refusals and sufficiently important to give prestige to the enterprise, Churchill, acceding to the titular stipulations of the Chiefs of Staff, decided that the next Adviser, Combined Operations, should be Captain Lord Louis Mountbatten, then in America waiting for H.M.S. *Illustrious* to be repaired.

The reasons that moved Churchill to name Mountbatten Adviser, Combined Operations, with the acting rank of Commodore on October 4, 1941, are said by some to be less obvious than those already mentioned. On excellent authority, four have been suggested to me. The first is that Churchill, it seems, develops a special confidence in and affection for men with whom he has played polo. Beatty is one of these. In World War I he rose from Captain to Admiral of the Grand Fleet and was, incidentally, an excellent choice for the post. The second reason given is that he felt he owed Prince Louis of Battenberg some compensation for his

Churchill's, failure to give the First Lord of the Admiralty open support at the time of his retirement from office under unjust public suspicion of disloyalty in 1914. Churchill had never been able to do anything for Prince Louis, but now an opportunity had presented itself to promote his son. The third reason advanced for the choice of a junior captain for this responsible post was Churchill's wish at the time to goad the "Wise Old Men", the Chiefs of Staff. The fourth and last reason given is that a very dashing destroyer commander seemed best fitted to initiate the dramatic action, at least on the experimental plane, for which, in Churchill's opinion, the time had come. To the casual observer it may seem unnecessary to look for a reason beyond Mountbatten's proven qualities of leadership and his ability as a technical and operational organizer.

Mountbatten in many ways had one of the hardest and most fascinating tasks of the war as Adviser, Combined Operations. First, because of the hostility with which his Headquarters was regarded by many orthodox warriors, and second, because there was no precedent or plan on which he could act. In every case he had to originate his own operations, which made his task far more interesting than Eisenhower's, who, when he took over the Supreme Allied Command in Europe, was told exactly what to do, what he was to be given to do it with, and how he should set about it. Eisenhower's only business was to co-ordinate the various elements of his Command and see that everything ran smoothly.

If Mountbatten had a difficult task and overcame almost insuperable obstacles in performing it, the officers who worked with him found him, nevertheless, far from ideal as Chief of Combined Operations. His ability to make quick decisions, his inexhaustible energy, his mastery in the art of dealing with people, and his receptiveness to new ideas were all characteristics that made him a success at his work, but they also made him at times a very difficult superior officer to deal with. Even in this high post he could not overcome a passion for detail which he should have left to others.

For instance, if one of his staff came into his office with important plans to be considered, Mountbatten might greet him cheerfully with some such words as, "Hello, Jim, you are just the man I wanted to see. Come with me and let's look over the next house. We are going to take it as an annexe for headquarters. I'm especially anxious to have your opinion on a lot of changes I want to make." So the plans would be neglected and they would go to the next house. Mountbatten would begin on the first floor. "We shall need a place here for the guards to sit," he might say. "This room is too big. We can't afford to waste space. The best idea would be to build a partition here, bisecting the room, then a door could be placed at this end and so we could use the other half of

the room for storing stationary supplies, and that would not deprive the guards of the benefit of the window. Don't you agree?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would you make any other changes?"

"No, sir."

Mountbatten would continue: "We should have a telephone here so that it will be near the light and the guards can see to dial the numbers. Now let's see about the next room. Ah! this could be used as an office and the small room beyond it would be all right for a secretary. If we cut a door here, the secretary would not have to go out of her room and into the corridor to get into the office."

And so the hours would pass as Mountbatten would go from room to room making suggestions, turning to his Staff officer for opinions, planning changes, while the Staff officer grew weak and pale and the plans remained neglected on Mountbatten's desk.

Sometimes just the opposite would happen. An officer might come into Mountbatten's office and say: "I think it would be a good idea if we put some light arms into procurement, sir. The Sten gun seems——"

"I absolutely agree. We must get immediate delivery on a thousand Sten guns. They'll be just the thing for the three new Commandos. It is vital that they be produced immediately."

The officer might frequently have to leave without having been given time to finish what he was going to say, that the Sten gun might be all right but he thought that recent tests had proved the Browning automatic in some ways a superior piece of ordnance.

On another occasion he might storm into a meeting and state abruptly, "Gentlemen, what would you say if I told you the Germans had a new light machine-gun with a muzzle velocity of '665 which fires 980 rounds per minute while the best we have is one with a muzzle velocity of '435 which fires only 420 rounds per minute?"

"My God, is that true, Dickie?" somebody would ask.

"No," Mountbatten would answer, grinning, "but *we* have, and here is the inventor," and with that he would turn to some small man who had entered the meeting behind him unnoticed.

Making quick decisions was a habit Mountbatten had learned from Admiral A. B. Cunningham when he was on the Mediterranean station, at least according to one of his old friends. Cunningham had found that there is no trait more annoying in a senior officer than taking a long time to make up his mind, the "Now let me see, uh . . ." mentality. His way, therefore, was to make an instant decision, counting on the officer who had come to him to raise objections if he was not satisfied. In Mountbatten's case, officers who did not understand they were expected to



speak up if there was an occasion to frequently criticized him for making decisions without hearing them out.

One of his faults which annoyed his Staff more than any other was his habit of delegating a task to somebody, perhaps, "Get in touch with Major Smith and give him a thorough dressing-down for not having had those plans sent down to the office yesterday," and then anticipating his delegate so that when the officer called the Major Smith in question and started bawling him out as ordered he would be coolly informed that Commodore Mountbatten had just spoken to him. This practice of ordering somebody else to do a task and then getting ahead with it himself was so frequent that it was known by his family as "doing a Lord Louis".

He frequently dismayed those around him by becoming involved in an absolute mesh of intrigue, a good part of which was necessary but a certain part of which might not be. He might arrange to get a specified amount of armour-plating in return for seeing to it that somebody else was assigned to a job he wanted. As frequently happens when one does this sort of thing, the situation would become fantastically complicated in the end. As General Laycock said to me, "Dickie has the really awful trait of wanting to arrange things so that everybody is happy."

As Chief of Combined Operations he was always determined that his headquarters should be a little better than any other headquarters. This led him to order that the bar and cafeteria should be open to all ranks with the idea of giving officer and enlisted personnel a chance to know each other off duty and to mix informally, contrary to all naval or military precedent. This arrangement proved more embarrassing than conducive to *esprit de corps*.

Although Mountbatten must have been flattered, as a junior captain, at being appointed Chief of Combined Operations, he cannot have been blinded by the compliment to the pitfalls that lay ahead of him from the start. In the first place his youth would be against him, for there is no section of society in the world in which old-age security benefits are more jealously guarded than in the three Services of the fighting forces of Great Britain. Authority and rank advance in time, and there is supposed to be no short cut to either as there is none to seniority in years. But this was not the only ground on which Mountbatten's appointment was resented. If there is anything that any service in the world detests it is what it describes as a "private army", that is, an organization within the Service under one individual who commands a group of men with whom he can do more or less as he chooses, independently of the whole. Objection to such an assumption of independence is not entirely ill-founded, and as it had been raised against Keyes, so now it was to be raised against Mountbatten. The Air Force officer might say: "Here I am, trying to carry out



Broadcast from Burma, 1944

*[British Official photo]*



*[British Official photo]*

Mountbatten and Monty, Normandy, 1944

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operations with the 'planes under my command. All of a sudden along comes an order to divert so many aircraft from their base to engage in some wildcat scheme which, even if it proves to be a success, I get no credit for, while here I sit with that much less personnel to do the job to which I have been assigned." The infantry officer might raise very much the same objection, while the naval officer, naturally enough, would not want a fleet, even if made up of ungainly and anomalous landing-crafts to sail under the orders of any authority but the Admiralty. He would also object to having shipyards which, in his opinion, should be turning out nothing but capital ships, destroyers, or merchantmen, cluttered with such clumsy hybrids.

But there was a more fundamental objection in the minds of the professional warriors, and this was the very fact that the Operations this Cinderella of the Services was to undertake were to be *Combined*. Under a single authority, the Navy would be responsible for getting troops to an objective and taking them away again; the Army would be responsible for training these troops and for their leadership while fighting; the Air Force would be responsible for maintaining over the ships and beaches during an operation an umbrella of air coverage, as well as for bombing certain key points of the enemy defences. In fact, each fighting Service would have to sacrifice a part of its sovereignty in the interests of co-operation. In the opinion of many a senior officer an order calling for such co-operation would be the handwriting on the wall fatefully spelling out future consolidation of all the Services into one. Gone would be the tradition of Nelson, the hallowed associations of certain regiments with the men who fought at Agincourt. Gone would be the Service peculiarities which were revered as individualities. "People hate change, especially if it is a change for the better," Lord Fisher once remarked. Integration of the Services would be a change for the better, so even the slightest whisper of the suggestion of such a thing was not to be tolerated.

His ultimate success in overcoming this non-co-operation Mountbatten attributes to his membership in the Chiefs of Staff Committee. Indeed, he says, "If I had not been a member of the Chiefs of Staff Committee it would have been impossible to have staged 'Overlord' as soon as it was, for it was my membership which made it possible for me to get the landing-ships and landing-craft built, the military camps and airfields built for combined training centres and my technique accepted by the three Services!" It was the fact that he was a part of that small body that gave him the requisite authority to overcome the resistance of the Services when he required trained technicians, or to put in requisitions for anything from shovels to ocean-going landing-craft.

The importance and great authority of the Chiefs of Staff Committee is not difficult to grasp when one remembers that it comprises, beside,

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the heads of the three Services, the Prime Minister's personal representative, and that it is responsible for the whole strategic conduct of the war.

Like Keyes before him, Mountbatten, as Adviser, Combined Operations, acted in an advisory capacity and sat at the meetings of the Chiefs of Staff only when Combined Operations were on the agenda. No sooner had he been promoted to the rank of Commodore and placed at the head of Combined Operations, however, than he began to think of changing his status from that of Adviser to full membership in the Committee. Though he kept this objective fully in mind, he did not press towards it. He attended meetings when Combined Operations were on the agenda, and gave his opinion when referred to, always showing the keen interest he felt in the proceedings, but he never abused the privilege of speaking.

He showed the same discretion in another connection. As I have said, he had captured Churchill's confidence, so he was frequently asked to No. 10 Downing Street, or down to Chequers for the week-end to discuss until all hours, over cigars and brandy, every possible aspect of the conduct of the war. Frequently the two talked about Combined Operations—what projects were tabled and what others might be initiated. Mountbatten was the only man who sat temporarily or permanently on the Chiefs of Staff Committee who enjoyed the Winstonian confidence, but he never took unfair advantage of the fact. On every occasion when Churchill consulted him about some phase of the war, Mountbatten was careful to submit a memorandum to the Committee, covering all points discussed between him and the Prime Minister and stating any suggestions he had made. In this way he made it certain that the Chiefs of Staff would not feel he was using his access to the ear of the Prime Minister as a secret door by which to evade the watchful eye of authority.

There was little opposition, therefore, when, six months after Mountbatten had been appointed Adviser, Combined Operations, Churchill appointed him a full member of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, raising his acting rank at the same time from Commodore to Vice-Admiral and making him also an Air Marshal and Lieutenant-General, so that he would hold rank and have authority in the three Services. This was the first "triphibious" staff assignment of the war and a symbol of global warfare. The word "triphibious" was soon in current use.

Mountbatten used two methods to overcome the obstructionism and negativism which he continually met. One might say that he had two barrels to his gun. The first was loaded with charm, persuasion and salesmanship; the second with ruthlessness. Many have attested to his ability as a salesman. From all accounts he surpassed himself once at Quebec while putting over an idea for making floating airfields out of ice reinforced with sawdust. To demonstrate the characteristics of the material

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he brought to the Quebec conference a supply of sawdust which he ordered to be mixed with the right proportion of water and frozen in the refrigerating plant of the Château Frontenac. When the subject of fields of reinforced ice came up on the agenda, he astonished the Combined Chiefs of Staff by having a large block of ordinary ice and another of reinforced ice wheeled in on a hand truck at the proper dramatic moment and inviting any one present to try to split the two blocks with a hatchet. This was a pleasant distraction for men who had been spending days discussing fleet dispositions and the knottier problem of logistics and they fell in with the plan enthusiastically. General H. H. Arnold, voted the strong man of the party, stepped forward. Spitting on his hands, he took up the axe and, after going through the preliminary motions of a professional baseball batter, smote a mighty smite which split the ice block at a blow. After this triumph he shook his clasped hands above his head, to the applause of the Chiefs of Staff. Thus encouraged, he advanced upon the block of reinforced ice, prepared for an even more shattering demonstration. He raised the hatchet above his head and brought it down as before, but the result was not the same. He let go the axe with a howl of pain. It had made only a slight indentation in the block and he might just as well have struck a rock, so severely were his sinews jarred.

After the laughter had subsided, Mountbatten put on his next act with a Service revolver. This he fired into a remaining large fragment of ordinary ice and disintegrated it at once. When he fired at the still intact block of reinforced ice, however, the bullet ricocheted back and barely missed Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal as it lodged in the ceiling of the conference chamber. The story will be remembered, for, in selling an idea, Mountbatten had provided the most hilarious entertainment enjoyed at any meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. On account of his personality and his ability to present an idea, he was one of the few high-ranking British officers who was thoroughly liked by the Americans, always apt to be on the alert for snobs and snubs.

In April 1942, when General Marshall went to London to discuss future Allied strategy, he met Mountbatten at a Chiefs of Staff Committee meeting and asked if he might visit Combined Operations Headquarters. He went that afternoon with his planning officer, Lieut.-Colonel A. C. Wedemeyer. Mountbatten held a small informal meeting in his office and told Marshall about his organization and the plans he envisaged for large-scale amphibious operations. Marshall was enthusiastic, saying that these operations would take place as soon as possible and on the largest possible scale, and asked Mountbatten for his recommendations.

Lord Louis, seeing his opportunity, replied, "Telegraph this afternoon doubling every order for landing-ships and landing-craft I have placed in America through Lend-Lease." He went on to explain that for

any short range invasion, as in the Channel or the Mediterranean, large infantry landing-craft would be needed. The only infantry landing-craft then in existence had to stop off the coast and lower their assault craft to transport troops from the ship to the beach, wasting a great deal of time during which they would be exposed to enemy fire. It would be far better, Mountbatten said, if a landing-craft were designed to carry about two hundred men direct from shore to shore after the initial wave.

"Is there a design for such a craft in existence?" asked General Marshall.

"There is not," was Mountbatten's reply, "but this is the general idea of what I want," and there and then he sketched it out on a sheet of paper which he handed to Marshall.

"How many of these shall I order?" asked Marshall after he had examined the design.

"In the first instance, three hundred," said Mountbatten; "one hundred and fifty for you and one hundred and fifty for us. They must be capable of crossing the Atlantic in midwinter and if possible delivery should start around the end of this year. If you can also let me have two thousand small marine engines," he added, "I will take up one thousand Thames barges and convert them, with two engines to each barge, for follow-up use across the Channel."

Thus, by exercising his ability to seize an opportunity and make a snap decision, he increased the British Navy by a fleet of 150 ships. Incidentally, he forgot to inform the Admiralty for nearly a month that there was to be a new fleet and that each ship would require a crew of thirty.

Mountbatten was as competent in dealings with the men under his command as he was in dealings with his superiors, and the keynote of his relations with them was always consideration. When one of the first American Ranger Companies came to England to train in co-operation with the Commandos he heard that they wanted to be allowed to wear the green beret which distinguished the Commandos, with whom they had trained, instead of their standard overseas cap. He heard of this wish just before they left England to participate in their first raid and immediately ordered enough berets for the Rangers sent down by special carrier to the port in time for the embarkations.

If he accomplished miracles by his ability to seize the right moment and to deal with people in getting what he wanted for Combined Operations, when these failed he was perfectly prepared to fire the second barrel to his gun, complete ruthlessness.

When he was first appointed to head Combined Operations he was very anxious to get a corps of engineers attached to his organization. The engineers are a special branch of the British Army and at that time were under the administrative command, among others, of a very senior



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technical officer. Mountbatten first applied to him, through regular channels and without result, for a detachment for beach construction, an essential factor in Combined Operations. For policy reasons the engineers wanted to remain distinct and not be detached from their special branch for any purpose, however important that purpose might be. As the months advanced, Mountbatten realized more and more acutely the necessity of having a body of engineers attached to his experimental station. As yet none had been made available to him except one or two very junior liaison officers unaccompanied by any enlisted personnel. Mountbatten protested, wrote long letters explaining why he needed them, but nothing served to extract one more engineer from the corps.

Finally he decided that the only thing to do was to bring the matter up at the next meeting of the Chiefs of Staff. It was duly put on the agenda. On the appointed day, Mountbatten brought the matter up for discussion. General Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, was in the chair. He told Mountbatten again that "for policy reasons it was impossible to have any engineers detached from their special division". This would have satisfied and stopped most professional warriors, but, characteristically enough, the young Chief of Combined Operations was not dissuaded.

When the meeting was over it is said he spoke to General Brooke in the corridor. He asked him, "Privately, now that the matter is closed, wasn't it a certain general who briefed you to refuse me any engineers for my branch?" Brooke admitted that this was true. Immediately Mountbatten went back to his headquarters, telephoned the general and asked for an appointment.

"Tomorrow at two?"

"Very well."

Mountbatten went to the general's office. He was greeted politely in an aroma of petty triumph.

"Won't you sit down?"

Mountbatten cut him short. "Do you know the question of whether or no I am to have an engineer detachment came up at the Chiefs of Staff meeting yesterday? The refusal of my request 'on policy grounds' came, I understand, from you. I consider this to be no more than obstructionism and I don't intend it to rest here. This is the only department in which I have met with obstructionism on such a scale. I intend to report the matter to the Prime Minister and if necessary have it taken up at a meeting of the War Cabinet. If that is not high enough, I will take it to the King. Before I do this I want your final answer. Do you agree in principle that I shall have a detachment of engineers? The details can be settled later. All I want now from you is an agreement in principle. Yes or no?"



"Yes," was the faint response.

One day Mountbatten was faced with a similar kind of obstructionism at a Chiefs of Staff meeting at which was present a naval commander, who used often to attend as the representative of the naval planners. Mountbatten had been observing him for some time, for he was one of those who delight in saying "No," a word which Mountbatten would not tolerate from anyone. He had brought forward some plan to which the commander objected that it was not feasible because of the dictates of naval policy. Mountbatten blazed, "You there, what is your name?" knowing it full well. The commander stammered his name, turning pale. "Well, it is high time you learned something, Commander. At these meetings people say 'yes', not 'no'. Is that quite clear? What did you say your name is again, Commander? I want to report you to your superiors."

After the meeting he apologized to the officer, explaining to him that negativism must not be allowed to exist in war-time.

If Mountbatten strove to achieve inter-Service co-operation at his headquarters, he was equally interested in gaining inter-Allied co-operation, especially with the United States. At his meeting with Marshall, the General had suggested sending over American officers to study Combined Operations at Mountbatten's headquarters. Mountbatten declared he would be delighted, provided these Americans could be integrated with the staff as full members, not as additional liaison officers. So far as is known, this was the first time it had been suggested that advantage should be taken of the common language to integrate the staffs of the two nations.

General Marshall selected as head of the American contingent Brigadier-General Lucian Truscott, who later applied what he had learned as Commander of the American division which carried out the assault landings at Port Lyautey on the coast of Morocco and at Licata in Sicily. For both these operations Mountbatten provided him with a fully integrated staff from his own headquarters.

In June 1942 Mountbatten visited the United States at the invitation of General Marshall to follow up with the United States Chiefs of Staff the discussion which the two had begun in London three months before. At an interview at Admiral King's office, Mountbatten was asked how the naval side of the British Combined Operations Command was organized. After hearing the explanation, King said, "I don't believe our Navy would adopt the same method of organization."

"In any case," Mountbatten replied, "you should see our system in action. There is no time to be lost. If you will send me a really first-class flag officer and staff for three weeks I will show them the whole working of the Combined Operations Command, and they shall have whatever

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training they wish." King refused to commit himself, but invited Mountbatten to lunch with him at the Navy Department the following day.

When Mountbatten arrived for lunch King introduced him to Admiral Hewitt, saying: "Here is your flag officer. Take him back with you."

Admiral Hewitt and his staff went to England at once and spent three weeks in intense study of British methods. After this, a close and continuing liaison was established between the United States naval and military officers in charge of amphibious operations and the British Combined Operations Command.

During this visit Mountbatten was paid an honour of which he was very proud. General Marshall invited him to take the salute with him at the march-past of the First American Army. Few foreign generals had been privileged to take the salute of an entire U.S. Army Corps on parade, and certainly no admiral had.

However, Combined Operations was not transformed from the Cinderella of the Services into its later brilliant shape by a succession of clever tricks at Staff meetings on Mountbatten's part. His contribution was far more solid than that. It was made by working harder than anyone else in his headquarters and, possibly, in the Services. His day began at seven-thirty, when he was called, given a cup of tea and handed messages marked "Immediate", which had been transmitted to him by a direct line from his office. The most urgent answers were drafted while he was in his dressing-gown and telephoned back to the office at eight o'clock. Forty-five minutes later he had breakfast, after which he jumped into his car and drove to his headquarters about ten minutes' distance away. At nine-fifteen he held a scheduled conference with members of his staff to prepare his notes for the Chiefs of Staff meeting, which would usually last from ten-thirty to one o'clock. After that he had a light lunch, usually in the cafeteria, where he took his place in the queue without anyone thinking it extraordinary. An hour and forty minutes later he was back in his office, where he held a meeting with his departmental chiefs to go over the plans for such raids as were under consideration and generally examine what progress had been made and what decisions had been reached. From four to five he would answer letters and dictate memoranda. The next two hours he left for a procession of visitors, a cross-section which might include all sorts of men from admirals to newspaper correspondents. Before he went home for dinner at eight he would spend another hour signing orders and letters and answering more messages marked "Immediate". From ten o'clock until midnight he might attend a Defence Committee meeting or the Prime Minister's Staff Conference, or a meeting of the War Cabinet, whichever happened to be scheduled for that night.

On the rare evenings when none of these meetings was called he worked at home, reading dispatches and reports until about midnight.

Sundays he usually spent inspecting such establishments as the Com-mando schools situated along the coast or the experimental station at Bideford. When he was through with these routine inspections he spent the rest of the day catching up on what paper work he had been unable to complete during the week.

During this time his early self-discipline, and the training his mother had given him in not postponing any duty, made him able to stand up well under the strain of such a schedule. Yet it was enough to break down even Mountbatten's superhuman endurance. After two years a short but very serious illness, coupled with the vivid word-pictures his friends painted of his future as a broken, trembling, senile, semi-paralysed old man of forty-two in a wheel-chair, sufficiently alarmed him to make him decide to decentralize his authority more and to modify his daily routine at least to the extent of cutting out all work after dinner except for a half-hour devoted to dealing with "urgent" messages.

If Mountbatten showed tact, originality and energy in overcoming obstacles and getting what he wanted during the preparatory stages of Joint Operations, he showed these qualities in even higher degree when it was time to plan to move effective forces from one shore to another. Since the days of Drake and Byng, of the Spanish Main and the Wars of the Succession, there had been little precedent for what Mountbatten was proposing to do, and what there was promised failure. To solve the problem a new approach must be sought, as new to modern warfare as Drake's technique in the sacking of Cadiz had been to the warfare of the 16th century. To operate successfully the functional equation of Combined Operations had to include as one of its terms an independent variable known as originality, and originality is not one of the characteristics encouraged in the training of professional warriors, in spite of the fact that all great military leaders from Philip of Macedon to Lawrence of Arabia have been successful because of their originality. This variable Mountbatten had to provide almost alone.

The Admiralty, for instance, had never been an organization particularly noted for its readiness to accept or adopt new developments, nor yet one to do all it could to stimulate initiative and originality. In the early 19th century the Board of Admiralty had been conservative enough to turn away an inventor who submitted an idea as subversive to the established order as the substitution of iron for wood in the construction of the hulls of sailing ships. They rejected it in deference to the scientific fact, known to all, that iron is heavier than water and so cannot float. Almost a century later the same board, having referred Marconi's invention to a special signals committee for investigation, received the con-

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sidered judgment of the committee that wireless telegraphy should not be adopted because its sparking might cause explosions in the magazines of His Majesty's ships on which it was installed.

Once Mountbatten was holding a meeting at which a very original idea for the design of an unsinkable ship was under discussion. An officer was unfortunate enough to remark: "I don't see anything so remarkable about designing an unsinkable ship. I am sure I could have developed one."

Mountbatten turned to him and with an expression of passionate earnestness said, "In that case, why in heaven's name haven't you done so?"

"I have never received a staff requirement for an unsinkable ship," was the officer's reply, and he had the good grace to blush as he said it.

When he was first appointed head of Combined Operations he saw immediately the necessity of stimulating originality and initiative and decided to bring some scientists into the organization. His strongly scientific bent, as well as the fact that he had as much scientific training as a naval officer can receive, made him realize that the gigantic tasks ahead of Combined Operations could be tackled only with the help of specialists, and that these must be fully integrated members of his Headquarters Staff, rather than expert advisers to be consulted occasionally as they had been under the system adopted since the last war by the Royal Navy.

If Mountbatten met resistance to this idea from his Headquarters Staff, that which he met from the three fighting services as a whole was staggering. As a general rule they regarded scientists as amiable eccentrics, as "absent-minded professors" or "mad Moriarties"—no more.

The real value of the scientists lay in the fact that they saw things from a different angle. They did not, as Mountbatten was never tired of saying, "have Staff College minds". When a raid was being planned, they could tell the planners what was possible from a purely scientific point of view. This often opened to the planners new techniques and methods they would not have thought of without the knowledge that they were scientifically feasible. On their side, the planners often contributed to the scientists new problems to solve based on the objectives to be attained and arrive at answers implicated in the questions of the planners.

According to Mountbatten in the Directorate of Experiments and Staff Requirements, "scientists were able to gain first-hand experience of military planning, and to learn what the planners wanted to accomplish. At that point, their function was, as Sir Henry Tizard put it, to give the planners not what they wanted, but what they needed."

When scientists were first integrated into Combined Operations he arranged that passes be issued to them permitting them to enter into the planning of any operation. The professional warriors did not approve

of this arrangement at first and found the simplest expedient to keep the scientists away was not to let them know in which rooms or at what times the planners were to meet. After a few months, however, the planners began to feel they had made a mistake and the scientists were eagerly welcomed. As a result of Mountbatten's tact and imagination in handling his Headquarters Staff these scientists came to be accepted without friction as indispensable partners in the enterprise.

As not infrequently happens to innovators, Mountbatten began to think too much of his new idea for its own sake, to lay too great an emphasis on originality for originality's sake, and on unorthodoxy for unorthodoxy's sake. As a result, surrounding the sound suggestions on improvements in landing gear and solid scientific reports on the effectiveness of various types of offshore bombardment, there was a definite "lunatic fringe" of eccentric proposals. Mountbatten established the policy that nobody who came forward with a revolutionary suggestion should be denied a hearing. He had learned from experience with the Oerlikon gun that an idea is not inevitably accepted on its merits, so he fell over himself to assure every dreamer, however fantastic, a hearing. A man with eyes that glittered behind horn-rimmed glasses, with a high, bald forehead and a goatee and who was named Geoffrey Pyke, was one of those who introduced him to a couple of schemes which were as brilliant as they were unusual.

Pyke, before the Dunkirk evacuation, had made a comprehensive analysis of the Allies' general situation. It seemed hopeless. What was to be done? While he pondered the problem, Dunkirk fell, and Norway and Sweden were overrun. The situation had worsened, and it was urgent that some sort of retaliation be made. But how?

Within three weeks of applying himself to the problem, Pyke had the answer.

With mastery of the snows, he saw at once that strategic pressure could be put upon the enemy, in Norway chiefly, but also in Rumania, Northern Italy and parts of France. And this mastery could be achieved by producing a machine that was capable of traversing snow-covered country rapidly and of climbing steep gradients. Numbers of such machines dropped, with their necessary personnel, by parachute, could attack and destroy vitally important hydro-electric power plants. Not only would this be effective action, but it would also cause the enemy to make greater concentrations of troops in the countries attacked.

Satisfied with his answer, and enlisting the aid of a greatly impressed Cabinet Minister, Mr. L. S. Amery, Pyke sought to get his scheme adopted. But the War Office was evasive or elusive, and nothing came of all his efforts until Mountbatten, then newly appointed Chief of Combined Operations, apprised of it—and at first apparently unappreciative—

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eventually took it up with characteristic enthusiasm. He summoned Pyke to a meeting of representatives of the three Services, and for an hour Pyke spoke to the gathering, analysing the strategy of the war and presenting his plan. There and then a resolution, proposed by a general from the War Office, was passed that the plan was sound, feasibly and completely worth while, and that it be put into immediate effect.

Mountbatten at once informed Churchill at "Chequers" of the project, and obtained his unqualified approval; and this was echoed by General Marshall when he was told of it on his arrival in England in March 1942. Committees were formed immediately, to report, within a few days, on various aspects of the plan, such as the feasibility of damaging the Rumanian oil refineries, which lay just within the "snow coastline" and on the proposed size and function of the machine required by the project. It was decided that research should be conducted in America, where the snow conditions would be most suitable; and Pyke—who had already gathered a vast amount of data on the incidence of trees, chiefly in Norway, the constitution of power stations, and so forth—was, on General Marshall's invitation, flown to New York, and a room in the War Department placed at his disposal.

There the plan, which hitherto had been known in England under the code name of "Plough", was renamed "Weasel".

A force—the First U.S. Special Service Force—was eventually recruited, composed in the first instance of Canadian and United States volunteers (though eventually it contained a considerable proportion of Norwegians), and training begun, under snow conditions, in ski-ing, parachuting and winter warfare.

But the Americans failed to grasp the urgency of the project, which aimed at invasion of Europe in the winter of '42-'43; research was hampered, and many difficulties arose which were all too slow in being resolved. Time went on inexorably, and it became increasingly clear to Pyke that his scheme, which Mountbatten had hailed as "one of the boldest and most imaginative of the war", and about which Churchill had declared himself "crazy with enthusiasm", was fated to fail of fruition.

Accordingly, he cast about for another to replace it, applying his mind to a new analysis of the problems connected with the strategic prosecution of the war. Was it possible, this time, to find a solution common to them all? They made a formidable list. There was the submarine depredation (growing, in that winter of '42-'43, acute); the problem of 'plane *versus* ship; the shortage of shipping; the eventual invasion of Europe requiring supremacy of the air; and the mastery of the Pacific. Yes, a formidable list of problems.

But Pyke discovered that the lot possessed a common factor. If it were possible to devise an unsinkable ship, he reasoned, then in

UNSINKABILITY he had the common factor of all the problems, and their single, simple answer. An unsinkable ship would be proof against submarine and against 'plane; it could with complete immunity to all danger carry troops and cargo; an unsinkable aircraft-carrier could maintain air supremacy within its radius of operation.

To effect mastery of the air away from land bases, Pyke envisaged an aircraft-carrier of astonishing proportions. In order to satisfy the dual purposes of accommodating the largest of long-range, heavily-laden bombers, and of being unsinkable and virtually impregnable, he planned a fantastic vessel of two thousand feet in length, three hundred in beam, and weighing about two million tons—in other words, a ship some twenty-five times the size of the *Queen Mary*.

He produced a 200-page report on his findings: and thus was born "Habbakuk" (the name being taken from that minor prophet described by Voltaire as being *capable de tout*): conceived daringly as vessels constructed of ice reinforced with wood-pulp—which substance was named "Pykrete", after its inventor—vessels which, moving under their own power, could serve as unsinkable airfields or as ordinary troop- and cargo-carrying ships. Mountbatten presented the plan at a meeting of his staff, where he held up the thick typescript and said, "Gentlemen, I have here the means of winning the war!"

This dramatic introduction was followed by a period of intensive discussions. In Combined Headquarters and at the Admiralty there were widely divergent views on the plan. But Churchill, like Mountbatten, believed at once in the "dazzling advantages" it offered.

Much experimentation and construction of scale models followed; but, in the event, the plan was never put into execution, although, at the Quebec Conference in 1943 (when, as has been told, Mountbatten demonstrated the strength of "Pykrete" with axe and pistol to the Chiefs of Staff), it was decided that an inter-Allied (U.K., U.S. and Canadian) "Habbakuk" Board be set up; the Canadian Government had almost six months previously accepted the responsibility for building one "Habbakuk" at once, and two further ones when it was seen that the process of building proved successful. By 1944, however, the tide of war in the Atlantic and Pacific had at last changed, and so the project was in consequence dropped.

Several months later, when the S.H.A.E.F. staff had been hard at work on the planning of "Overlord", for relaxation they planned another operation which they called "Overboard". This called for a gigantic platform of ice, to be constructed at Portsmouth, one side of which was to be designed exactly to fit a section of the coastline of France. This was to be towed over, swarming with men and material, and pushed against the coast so all the men would have to do would be to walk directly ashore

without even getting wet. It was acclaimed as a brilliant scheme but was also the subject of much humour at Headquarters.

Yet another remarkable invention developed by Combined Operations Headquarters was the "Giant Panjandrum", a device shaped like a cannon running on two wheels connected with a cylinder of high explosive and powered by rockets. Its purpose was to run up a beach and blast a hole in a concrete sea wall. When tested it lumbered along the beach more or less in the direction in which it had been started, but then a wheel would get into a shell pit and it would spin around. Frequently it would turn over, spitting rockets in all directions. At one more than usually disastrous demonstration, before a group of "Very Important Personages", the Giant Panjandrum started up the beach at about forty miles an hour and, after nearly reaching its objective, spun around in a bomb crater to head back towards the stand from which high-ranking officers were watching the demonstration. It fell into another deeper crater just before it reached them, but not without first scattering flaming rockets over the terrified spectators.

It was his willingness to give everything a trial, and his determination to stimulate originality and initiative, that prompted Mountbatten to test all these notions rather than discount their possibilities. It also made him try out other ideas which appeared equally fantastic at first glance but which really did work.

The most important of these was undoubtedly the famous Mulberry Harbours that made the whole invasion of the Continent possible, but there were others which were of equal importance in their way. One of these was "Operation Pluto", a name composed of the first letters of the five words, "Pipe Lines Under The Ocean". When military historians assay each factor in Germany's defeat they will circle that secret operation in red. The pipe-lines were submerged hollow, flexible tubes through which, when the invasion of the Continent came, a million gallons of petrol coursed daily from Dungeness to Boulogne, fuelling the hundreds of tanks, trucks and battle-cars which hurled the Germans back across France.

The plan for this vital pipe-line started in Combined Operations after it was brought to Mountbatten's attention that, to support a large-scale invasion of the Continent, it would be necessary to move enormous supplies of petrol across the Channel almost immediately after the first assault wave had landed and that after that it would be one of the main items of supply. The standard Army method of transporting petrol then in use, and a method they did not propose to change, was in the four-gallon tins which had served them well in World War I, and this, in the Army's experience, was entirely satisfactory. Yet if these cans were to be used they would present a tremendous, almost an insurmountable,



shipping problem. Mountbatten's Experimental and Operational Research section made an alternative suggestion. This was to build ships like tankers that would tow behind them large empty drums. These could be landed on the coast of France and sunk into the earth, then a hose line could be run from the ship to the drum and the petrol pumped into this safe storage-tank ashore. The enormous difficulties entailed in loading and unloading millions of four-gallon tins would thus be eliminated.

When Captain T. A. Hussey, Director of Combined Operations Research Section, suggested this idea to him, Mountbatten said, "No, Tom, let's see if we can't think a little bigger than that."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, if we can run pipe-lines from ship to shore, why couldn't we run pipe-lines from shore to shore, from one side of the Channel to the other?"

The idea seemed to be feasible and Mountbatten suggested it to Geoffrey Lloyd, chief of the Petroleum Warfare Board, walking up and down at an airport one rainy evening while he was waiting for a plane.

As a result Geoffrey Lloyd's department developed a flexible steel tube, three inches in internal diameter, originally supplied in short lengths but welded together in lengths of 4,000 feet. These were wound on to a drum, and when the time came to put them to use the 4,000-foot lengths were welded together as they were rolled out until the line reached the total required length. This was known as the Hamel cable. Another sort of line resembling the casing of a submarine electric cable, made of lead reinforced with steel and weighing sixty-three tons per mile, was also developed. This was known as the Hais cable. Both were finally used with remarkable success, but Mountbatten experienced no small difficulty in putting them over to the Army, which loyally defended its faith in the standard four-gallon container.

Another device for which Mountbatten obtained acceptance was the so-called sea-mattress, also known as the L.C.T.R., the R standing for rockets. It had been originated by Colonel Langley and is a rocket-launching ship which, during an invasion, can supply the equivalent of a heavy artillery barrage such as is laid down on land before an infantry attack on a heavily defended area. The ship carries between 600 and 1,000 rocket-launching platforms, all set at a 45° angle. All these are loaded with Army 5-inch rockets, each equipped with an explosive charge. When a craft comes within range of the beach it discharges the rockets almost simultaneously, wrapping an entire area in a sheet of flame. Although it can do little damage against concrete emplacements, it serves to keep the heads of the enemy down and to dazzle them for the five or ten minutes needed for the landing. This is enough time to give the attacking force that slight advantage which makes all the difference in casualty figures.

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The barrage of rockets proved invaluable also because it so distracted the gunners on the beach that their fire was a great deal less accurate than it otherwise would have been.

When the invasion of Sicily was being planned it came to Mountbatten's attention that there were not sufficient ships available to give the landing forces the necessary fire support. He decided the application of Langley's idea was the only way to make up this deficiency. Why not convert a few L.C.T.s to fire-support craft by turning their decks into gigantic rocket-launching platforms? While there were not enough landing-craft available for conversion to give the invading forces the optimum intensity of fire support, at least they would bring up its ratio to manpower from the dangerously low level at which it otherwise would have stood.

When Mountbatten advocated the immediate refitting of the necessary number of landing-craft with rocket platforms he was met by a resistance almost as scoffing as though he had recommended that each man going ashore be equipped with a pea-shooter. Practically all the gunnery officers consulted said the rocket was entirely ineffective as a weapon because it could not be accurately aimed. The fact that a cluster of rockets could lay down a broad pattern of fire did not impress them, as they were convinced an effective piece of ordnance must have a sight. They also pointed out that the rocket-launching platforms, rigidly set at an angle of  $45^{\circ}$ , would permit no flexibility of direction. The difficulty of correctly determining the range for a barrage of rockets to be fired in fifty seconds, after which the craft would become useless, was also advanced as positive proof of the impracticability of their use. Contrary to all this expert advice, Mountbatten still believed their advantages outweighed their disadvantages and put the craft into procurement.

According to the official account of the invasion of Sicily, these rocket support-craft proved to be "outstandingly successful". They were subsequently used effectively in other landing operations.

Mountbatten himself instituted all-important changes in the field of wireless communication. Naturally enough, he took a particular interest in this phase of Combined Operations because of the eight years he had spent as a wireless specialist.

"In the earliest days of Combined Operation planning," he said subsequently, in a speech to the Institute of Radio Engineers, "the existing variations in equipment, procedure and general technique presented a great obstacle and it soon became clear that, if the three Services were to think, speak, plan and act as an integrated whole, this would involve integrating the technique of Service communications to the greatest possible degree."

The value of having done so was fully confirmed in the Normandy invasion.

Under his orders a landing-ship headquarters was first designed and constructed, fitted with twenty transmitting and sixty receiving sets for the control of a force consisting of any Army division with the corresponding naval and air components. Several more ships were later constructed along these lines by both the British and the Americans. They proved to be of great value during amphibious operations in keeping the commanders informed on how the situation was developing and enabling them to give such orders, delivered almost immediately to the forces under their control, as developments and changes in the situation might require.

At the Casablanca Conference Mountbatten pushed the adoption of such headquarters ships very strongly and cited as an instance of the need for them the incident during the North African invasion when Patten refused to accept one that Mountbatten had offered him. Instead of having his own headquarters ship, Patton decided to direct the landing from aboard a cruiser, which unfortunately became engaged in a sea action, so Patton did not arrive at the landing-beaches until after the assault was over. Mountbatten had his first headquarters ship, the *Bulolo*, sent to Casablanca to deal with the special problems of conference communications, and while it was there he persuaded all the important people to visit it and see its wonders for themselves.

A "Fighter Direction Ship" was also devised under Mountbatten's orders. Aboard a light, manœuvrable vessel with a hull designed as a housing for a complicated mass of radio and radar equipment, the air-force controller could have a complete knowledge of the progress of a battle in the air and direct all the aircraft in his command without any delay or difficulty.

As usual, Mountbatten was not content to do almost everything that was required himself and to use existing techniques effectively; he had to go the whole way and improve on the technique of wireless telegraphy itself. He thought its operation was not quick enough to enable commanders to gather all the information necessary for an engagement and to disseminate the necessary orders. He planned, therefore, that there should be a supplementary network of radio-telephone beams and integrated it with the established British telephone system so that commanders ashore and at sea could communicate with each other with the same speed and efficiency used when speaking between their London offices.

This improvement in communications organization was responsible for greatly facilitating, indeed for making possible, the elimination of congestion and the smooth operation of the communications system

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that made inter-Service and inter-Allied co-operation so remarkable a phenomenon of the Normandy invasion.

But the achievements of Combined Operations were to be measured not only in terms of technical improvements but by actual invasion plans developed during the black years. In the winter of 1941-1942 Combined Operations was responsible for the St. Nazaire, Vaagso, and Bruneval raids. Their story has been told often, but always as the romantic adventures of Commandos landing on an enemy coast rather than as the scientific experiments in the technique of invasion they really were.

The Vaagso raid was staged to land on the coast of Norway a company which was to remain ashore only long enough to kill a few Germans and withdraw some Norwegian volunteers. The objective of the St. Nazaire raid was to destroy the lock gates and the installations of the great dry docks situated there. This was strategically important, for it was the only dry dock on the entire coast of France big enough to receive the gigantic German battleship *Tirpitz*.

Although not as important strategically as the St. Nazaire raid, that at Bruneval was technically the most perfect and the most successful of the three. It had the added historical significance of being the first in which troops were dropped on their objective from the air and evacuated by sea.

Far more important historically, though far less successful, was the raid staged five months later against the harbour of Dieppe on the northern coast of France. Mountbatten turned this raid, which was the greatest failure of Combined Operations, into his greatest success.

It became apparent early in 1942 that it would be impossible to invade Europe during that year; but it was equally apparent, because of the situation in Russia, that *something must* be done. The Chiefs of Staff therefore decided to stage a greater cross-Channel raid than had ever been staged before, and hoped that by September the Allies might be in a position to launch a major combined operation against North Africa. At the same time, Mountbatten obtained authority to form an "International Commando" consisting of five troops, French, Dutch, Belgian, Norwegian and Polish respectively. These were employed principally in raids on their own countries, for in addition to their value as fighters (and some of them performed most gallantly, winning high British decorations), they were invaluable to the British Commandos as interpreters and in establishing liaison with the local population.

But a Commando consists of six troops, so Mountbatten conceived the idea of recruiting the sixth (which was christened "X Troop") from bitterly anti-Nazi Germans and German-speaking Central Europeans. He felt it was essential in raids of this kind to have men available who could shout to the German sentries in the dark, and even impersonate

inspecting officers, telling the German soldiers to "stand to attention when speaking to an officer". Some of these ruses proved useful and were successful. He also wanted to be able to interrogate prisoners immediately after their capture, since it is during early questioning that most admissions are made. In setting up this troop, Mountbatten showed that he was conscious of the great political importance of having the populations of the various Axis-conquered countries realize there were *some* Germans fighting on the side of the Allies. He took this step at a time when the United States War Department was flatly turning down White House proposals to use Japanese, Italians, and Germans of unquestioned loyalty to the Allies for the same purpose.

Meanwhile there was a great struggle for authority going on between Mountbatten and the Royal Navy, whose insistence that his landing-craft should be under their direct control increased in proportion to the expanding size of Mountbatten's fleet. He thought at last that one of the best ways to release the growing tension would be to appoint a high-ranking naval force commander for cross-Channel operations. Hitherto his own planning staff had prepared all plans for naval operations, though those for the ground forces in Combined Operations had always been prepared by the Commander-in-Chief Home Forces, and those for air operations by the Commander-in-Chief Fighter Command. To regularize the situation, Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay was placed in charge of naval force planning in Combined Operations.

Between Ramsay and Mountbatten a disagreement arose almost immediately as to who should be in command and control of the Naval Assault Forces during their training in Combined Operations. Ramsay claimed they should be under his control. Mountbatten, on the other hand, maintained the assault commander should be responsible for the naval forces only after they had been fully trained in assault methods. Until then, they should be under his control so they could be trained with the R.A.F. and ground forces with which they would have to co-operate during operations. He was finally able to convince the Chiefs of Staff that he must retain responsibility for the collective training of the three Services. Again he had made his point that complete co-operation and integration of the three Services was essential for Combined Operations.

While this argument was in progress, Combined Operations Headquarters were busy working on plans for the Dieppe raid that was to prove so famous and so disastrous. The nature of the reasons for undertaking the raid in the first place has made many people ask whether there was any justification for such a large and dangerous operation. As far as Mountbatten was concerned, he was given *carte blanche* by the Chiefs of Staff, who only stipulated that whatever operations he

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undertook "should not interfere with preparations for a return to the Continent".

For some time there had been agitation for action among the Canadian troops, who had been stationed in England for about two years without engaging in any fighting. Naturally enough, they were getting impatient. To describe the feeling in military slang, they wanted to "smell gunpowder" and get "blooded a bit". At the same time the United States War Department was pressing for an "invasion" in order to reassure the Russians, despite the unavailability of U.S. divisions for the purpose. Moreover, a large fleet of landing-craft of various types had been built up in the harbours of southern England, and as yet there had been no operation of sufficient size to engage even a segment of this fleet in action. It was essential that some experience should be gained in handling and manoeuvring these ships in considerable numbers. It was also thought at the time that, when the Continent was invaded, it would be necessary to secure a port early in the proceedings. The Dieppe raid would therefore serve the purpose of giving some indication of how heavily the ports of northern France were defended and how long it would take to secure one.

Militarily speaking, it is generally conceded that the Dieppe raid was a grim farce, for it was aimed at such military objectives as a power plant which supplied the town, a minor factory, the town hall, and the local German divisional headquarters. The choice of harbour to attack was limited, however, by the short range of the fighter 'planes essential for the protection of the raiders while the raid was actually in progress.

After the situation had been examined by planners from the three Services, two alternative plans were produced. The first was to assault Dieppe by a frontal attack on its beaches, supported by two flanking attacks, while, simultaneously, paratroops captured two batteries of heavy guns situated to the north and south of the town. The other plan was to make no frontal attack, but to go in on both flanks, isolating the town from its hinterland. This plan called for the use of two battalions on each flank and for two battalions to remain off shore as a floating reserve.

Shortly after these plans were drawn up an informal meeting was held at which the conclusion was reached that a frontal attack should be included in the operation, but that it should take place only after flank attacks had been made on the two heavy batteries outside the town, one to the east of it and the other to the west.

On April 25 Mountbatten held the first formal meeting at which the plans for the raid on Dieppe were discussed. It was argued that a frontal attack in Dieppe was possible because there were very few guns directly defending the city, and that the flank attacks, if made alone, would lose the value of surprise before the troops could get to the centre

of the city. The naval planners, who continued to express a doubt as to the advisability of a direct frontal assault, were assured that the sea front, where the troops would go in, could be softened up by maximum high- and low-level bombardment before the attack. Mountbatten finally accepted the plan which included the frontal assault preceded by bombardment.

A month later, while he was in America, the plans were changed to the extent of eliminating the high-level bombardment on the grounds, first, that the streets might become blocked with rubble which would make them impassable for tanks, and, second, that a heavy air attack would serve as a warning to the Germans, thus doing away with the all-important element of surprise. Diversionary attacks on nearby towns were substituted. There seems to have been no logical reason for the reluctance of the R.A.F. to take part in the operation so one can only guess that they had been inviting, ever since its inception, a test to prove their independence and to show that their aim was not merely to be a new form of artillery. Whatever the reasons for the departure from the original plan, the change proved to be disastrous.

This was the beginning of an epic of mischance. The dress rehearsal was a catastrophe. Some of the landings were made on the wrong beaches, many of the tank landing-craft were late, and the infantry, after it had landed, did not seem able to move inland fast enough. The next blow was that the whole operation had to be postponed for a month because of bad weather. Then the plans were changed again. The attacks on the batteries situated on the extreme flanks were now to be made by Commandos instead of paratroops. The reason given for this change was that should the weather be suitable for sea landings it might not be so for paratroops. Critics of General Browning's Airborne Division said the reason they dropped out was that they did not want their record marred by failure in an operation that did not entirely meet with their approval.

Early in August a plan was completed calling for four attacks to be launched to the east and west of Dieppe, thirty minutes before the main assault on the city itself. A total of 6,000 officers and men were to take part in the operations, 5,000 Canadians, 1,000 Commandos and 50 American observers-in-force from the first Ranger Battalion. Sixty-seven fighter and bomber squadrons and 252 ships and landing-craft were also to take part.

The two attacks on the east flank of the city both failed. On one beach the Commando company, after landing, was unable to reduce the German coastal battery which prevented its planned advance inland, although it was able to harass the battery successfully for some time by sniping. The regiment that landed on the other beach came late and in broad daylight. The men who waded ashore were never able to carry out

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their orders to secure the headland east of the city, for the force which landed was reduced by five minutes of German fire from an assault battalion on the offensive to two companies on the defensive.

The western flank attacks went better. One Commando company succeeded in demolishing a German coastal battery, together with its garrison. Another penetrated two miles inland towards its objective, which was either the aerodrome or German Divisional Headquarters; but, lacking support from the tanks which had landed at Dieppe, they were unable to complete their mission and were withdrawn from the point at which they had landed after suffering heavy casualties.

But the real catastrophe took place on the main beaches in front of the town. Failure to clear the headlands that looked down on them from both sides left the area the focus of a withering cross-fire emanating from positions which the troops could not attack. Even the tanks fared badly, for the engineers who were sent ashore to breach the road-blocks suffered such heavy casualties they were unable to carry out their orders, and only four tanks got beyond the esplanade wall. The rest were stopped on the beach.

On the headquarters ship more and more startling reports showed the Canadian Ground Commander in charge of the operation that the situation was bad and was fast getting worse. In an attempt to save the situation he diverted his floating reserves to reinforce the beach in front of the town. Troop after troop was hurled at the one point where the enemy was strongest, with the inevitable result that more and more formations were cut to ribbons by the German fire, which steadily increased in intensity. The situation continued to deteriorate. It became increasingly difficult for the landing-craft to close in on the beaches. Finally, the Canadian Force Commander gave the order to withdraw at eleven o'clock, which was six minutes after the eight hours originally planned for the operation had elapsed. Withdrawal was effected under very heavy fire, but at last somewhat less than half the forces that had embarked were able to return to England.

Though the operation was a failure from a military standpoint, from another it was more successful than any raid yet staged. It was, in fact, the first in the preparation of which consideration had been given on a planning level to psychological warfare. Up to that time, since the British were engaged in raids on the coasts of Norway and France—countries which had been Britain's allies until they were conquered, it had been assumed the populations (except for collaborators in high places) would remain friendly. Mountbatten, however, had feared there might be an unpleasant incident during the heat of action unless operations and psychological warfare were more closely co-ordinated. His fear was justified by the results of the St. Nazaire operation.



Operationally speaking, as has been said, the St. Nazaire raid was entirely successful, but from a psychological warfare point of view it was calamitous. At that time propaganda pressing for a "Second Front" was flowing freely; and the Germans, for the benefit of the occupied countries along the western coastline of Europe, were putting out even more emphatic counter-propaganda ridiculing the idea that Britain could ever attempt a return to the Continent.

So when the British raided St. Nazaire the French population naturally rallied to their support. Here, they thought, was the answer to the Nazi boasting, this was the beginning of the great invasion. The British, of course, having successfully achieved their limited objectives, withdrew a few hours later; but the wretched French, who had risen so loyally, had to continue a losing battle against the Germans, resisting with great bravery with any weapons they could lay hands on. After three days the last of these brave men had been overcome, whereupon hideous retaliations were inflicted on the local population as a punishment for rebelling and a warning of punishments to come if Frenchmen had the temerity to aid the British again.

This incident had the worst possible effect on French opinion. In the newspapers and over the radio the world heard a continuous stream of German propagandist statements claiming contradictorily both that the British had attempted an invasion and been driven off, and that they had only intended the attack as a raid, but had callously accepted the misguided support of the French, only to abandon them in the end, practically defenceless, to face the consequences.

Such a misunderstanding must not happen again. Vindicated in his views on the necessity of co-ordination, Mountbatten immediately set up machinery to prevent the recurrence of a like incident when the next important raid was scheduled. As a result, the psychological part of the plan for the Dieppe raid was carefully thought out. When the landing took place, it was timed to synchronize with the B.B.C.'s regular early news broadcast to France. The radio announced that the British and Canadians were in the act of landing at a port on the Channel; that this was not the invasion, but only a large-scale raid; that they would be told when the real invasion was to take place and their help was needed. The radio repeated this message at intervals throughout the morning.

Leaflets had been printed containing the same information for the troops to take ashore with them and scatter on landing. The men also had posters which they stuck up in such parts of the town as they were able to reach. The leaflets and the posters were aimed at the Germans rather than the French, for they must have no shadow of an excuse for asserting either that the British had called on the French to rise to their

support or that the French had risen of their own accord, in order to justify reprisals against them.

On my first evening at dinner with him in Singapore, when Mountbatten showed me the report about him the Gestapo had submitted to Himmler, he drew my attention to the fact that the Germans had been able to elicit practically nothing from the Canadian prisoners taken at Dieppe, except the fact that he had addressed them personally before the assault. I afterwards found out this speech was part of his psychological plan and was delivered with a very definite purpose. The operation was to entail the presence on the Continent of a large body of foreign troops for nine hours and a great part of them would be French-Canadians. It was vitally important that what they said and what they did should redound to their credit, for the story of their exploits and comment on their behaviour and bearing would go rattling over the cobbled streets of France from man to man within a few days.

Mountbatten felt so strongly about it that he was determined to speak to the troops himself before they embarked. On this occasion he told them they were to be the first men of the Allied forces since Dunkirk to return to France in any force, and the first to remain there for some hours in broad daylight and establish contact with the inhabitants. The French people, Mountbatten stressed, were our allies. Even after they had been betrayed by the corruption and inefficiency of their leaders, their loyalty to the Allies had never wavered. Although at present represented by a government of collaborators and traitors, they themselves had organized a vast underground resistance movement and were enduring mortification and persecution in the Allied cause. "You will not only be soldiers whose military exploits will be a credit to you," he told them, "you will also be ambassadors."

For reasons already given the Dieppe raid was postponed for a month at the last moment. During that month it was found out by those delegated to watch over the morale of the troops that to many of those he had addressed, even though they were French-Canadians, Mountbatten's words had come as a revelation. "The dirty French," it seemed many of them had been thinking before. "Just wait till we lay our hands on them!" It can well be imagined what the result might have been had those men been unloaded on the soil of France without some understanding of the political implications of their presence there.

The Germans realized that the psychological aspect of the Dieppe raid had been well handled but they also knew that, militarily, it had certainly been a complete failure. So jubilant were they about it, indeed, that the occasion prompted Hitler to make his last completely self-satisfied speech. There was no cause for lasting German jubilation, however, for the Dieppe raid marked the beginning of great things. America

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was now in the war, a great fleet of landing-craft had already been assembled and was being augmented daily by the arrival of more craft from the United States. There were to be no more small raids, mere pin-pricks on the distended flanks of Giant Axis as he lay over the surface of Europe breathing somewhat heavily but still confident in his strength. Daggers were to be thrust into his very vitals.

For after Dieppe came the invasion of North Africa and of Sicily, of the Italian peninsula, Salerno and Anzio, followed by the landing in Normandy, all eminently successful operations.

Mountbatten, like the able leader he is, turned failure into success after Dieppe by using its awful example of failure to frighten the Admiralty into giving him what he wanted. "If," he would say, "we don't get larger allocations, the next combined operation we make will be as big and as bloody a failure as Dieppe." For Dieppe had taught more than the elementary maxim that you must always attack your enemy where he is weak rather than where he is strong. It taught, for instance, that invading forces attacking a heavily defended fixed position must have far greater fire support than had been provided hitherto. Until the raid had failed, the Admiralty had not been quite prepared to face the fact that a landing was in essence a military operation. If a regular divisional commander had been ordered to attack a heavily defended position 2,500 yards away with fire-power equal only to that of five destroyers he would have objected that it meant massacre for his men. The lessons of the era of mortar barges, which had demonstrated how much more effective than a small number of large shells is a large number of small shells, had been forgotten since the time of Nelson. Now it had to be relearned. The deck of the mortar barge of the Napoleonic age was covered with small mortars. It was an instrument of war devised almost 200 years ago to provide adequate fire-power in support of assaults by sea, but the tactical principle involved had been lost sight of in the intervening period of barbed wire, bureaucracy and machine-guns.

As a result of the lessons learned from Dieppe, Mountbatten proposed to the Chiefs of Staff that the question of naval fire support should be thoroughly investigated. The Admiralty was quick to challenge Mountbatten's claims for the effectiveness of heavy fire-power from the sea, so a sub-committee was appointed under the Chiefs of Staff to investigate the question. The sub-committee reported that either monitors or old battleships and cruisers would have to be used to provide the very heavy fire essential to a large-scale attack on a heavily defended beach. In compliance with this conclusion the Admiralty condescended at last to convert old craft into a few monitors, but they stated emphatically they were prepared to use neither battleships nor cruisers in support of an assault. This was the decision that led to the adoption of

rocket craft for the invasion of Sicily. Two other important lessons were learned from Dieppe. First, it was necessary to apply more armour to landing-craft, for, on occasions, the entire personnel in one of these had been killed while the craft was still in sound working condition. Second, there must be preliminary bombing of the objective before a landing. Diversionary bombing had turned out to be useless.

The rest of the summer after Dieppe was spent by the Staff of Combined Operations Headquarters in feverish preparation for "Operation Torch", the great Allied landing in North Africa. This operation presented many problems, for it had to be planned and mounted from both Great Britain and America, so that co-ordination, so important in an undertaking of this kind, was very difficult. The situation was further complicated by the fact that there was no co-ordination between the Army Command and the Naval Command in America.

The rivalry, and therefore antagonism, that existed between the Services in Britain was just as intense in America, where also, thanks to the failure of General Donovan's O.S.S. to serve as the link for triphibian planning, there was no meeting-ground such as Combined Operations. As a result, during the planning stage of "Operation Torch", the headquarters of Admiral H. K. Hewett and his naval planners was situated at Norfolk while General Patton's was at the War Department in Washington. The only liaison between the two was supplied by British officers attached to both staffs. In fact, the two staffs met only after they had embarked, and even then regarded each other with traditional reserve.

Unfortunately, this operation was responsible for a change in the time schedule of the entire invasion of Europe, for its vast requirements in landing-craft made it impossible to amass sufficient force on the coast of England for the proposed invasion of Europe during 1943. The worst aspect of the situation, however, was the shortage of manpower. This was so acute that the Admiralty managed to assemble sufficient personnel, trained in handling the landing-craft arriving from America in increasing numbers, only after heroic efforts. It was Mountbatten who warned the Chiefs of Staff that the global need for landing-craft was so great no attempt to invade Europe in 1943 was to be thought of. "England will only have sufficient craft in 1943 for a landing by four to six brigades on the northern coast of France," he told them. On the basis of this conviction, Mountbatten went to the Casablanca conference in January 1943 to join with the British Chiefs of Staff in advocating a strategy based on operations in the Mediterranean, but the idea of postponing the invasion of northern France met with strong opposition from the American Chiefs of Staff, who were anxious to launch the invasion the same year.

While discussion and meetings were in progress in Casablanca, Mountbatten harassed the security officers in charge of the safety of the

distinguished visitors to the conference for permission to visit the beach of Fedala, where the North African invasion had taken place. This he was finally granted, although instructions had previously been issued that no one attending the conference was to be allowed outside the barbed-wire enclosure of the grounds in which it was being held. He had been fortunate enough to run into an old friend of the family amongst the security officers and so was able to get out to inspect the landing-beaches and also to visit the town of Casablanca by moonlight in mufti.

After the Casablanca conference he returned to London to begin planning "Operation Husky", the code name for the invasion of Sicily. The decision to land on Sicily had been, in fact, Mountbatten's own. The original plan had called for an Allied invasion of Sardinia, an island off the coast of Italy far to the north, but Mountbatten pointed out that this lay beyond the range of fighter cover for the landing. Without fighter cover the invasion would be a bad gambler's risk, for it was an established fact that air supremacy over the beach-head was essential to success.

One of Mountbatten's decisions was chiefly responsible for the success, or rather for the avoidance of the failure, of the landings in Sicily. Six weeks before "Husky" was scheduled to take off, Captain Hussey, Director of Experiments and Operational Research, who had been examining reports on the preliminary reconnaissances of the Sicilian beaches, told him great difficulty would be encountered in getting tanks ashore from the L.S.T.s. Although they drew only four feet, they would not be able to come close enough to shore over the long shallow shelving beaches of Sicily to land their cargo. Hussey told his Chief it was essential to find some gear the tanks could pass over to bridge the thirty-foot interval in which the water shelved from a depth of four feet to two, the greatest depth tanks can negotiate safely. He also added: "The only thing I have heard of which might meet the conditions is a piece of equipment invented in America called the Naval Landing Pontoon. It is a form of steel cell or pontoon and several cells can be connected to form a causeway or dumb-lighter."

"Take the next plane to Washington," Mountbatten snapped, "and if these pontoons will do what you think they will, let's see if we can't get them over in time for the invasion."

If a day had been lost and the pontoons had not arrived in time Patton's tanks would not have been able to land until special causeways had been constructed for them, delaying the landing of American armour for several crucial hours. As was to be expected, when Hussey arrived in Washington he found nobody in the Navy Department knew anything about Naval Landing Pontoons. He had better success at the Navy Yard in Norfolk, however, and there he conducted trials for a week. As they proved satisfactory, he requisitioned the necessary pontoons and had

them secured to the sides of L.S.T.s, which took them across the Atlantic to play their vital rôle in the invasion.

The invasion was witnessed by Mountbatten in person and at Montgomery's invitation he landed on D-Day plus one to spend three days with the Field Marshal. On several occasions during this period he acted as liaison officer between his host, Montgomery, and General Patton. "It went so well it was like a dress rehearsal," he later commented to General Eisenhower.

Shortly afterwards, when he returned to London, work began in earnest. In March, the Headquarters of the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Allied Command had already been established in England and a directive was issued to prepare plans for an invasion of northern France, to take place in a year's time. The directive specified that the assault was to be made by five divisions and two airborne divisions. It was up to Combined Operations to show how it could be carried out.

For some time both Mountbatten and Churchill had been thinking about one of the most vital problems of the invasion, the problem of supply. It was estimated that, even in the early stages of the invasion, about 12,000 tons of stores and 2,500 laden vehicles, from motor-cycles to twenty-ton trucks, would have to be unloaded every day. These figures represented the absolute minimum quantities requisite to support the invasion for the first ninety days.

Combined Operations Headquarters had pretty well solved the problem of transporting the initial assault forces across the Channel and landing them on the soil of France. They had established the formula in terms of ships, guns, tanks and men which represented, in symbols, the bloody reality of seizing a foothold on shore and holding a beach-head against counter-attack until forces had been built up sufficient to begin an offensive. But the problem, which had not been met in the quick raids on Norway or in the eight hours the Canadians had spent on shore at Dieppe, was that of supplying a vast and steadily growing Allied invasion force during an offensive and ensuring a flow of supplies uninterrupted by bad weather or surging tides.

Unless a harbour could be captured at once it would be necessary to bring in supplies and reinforcements across the Normandy beaches. It looked as though it would be impracticable to capture a harbour, for Hitler had been fortifying his "Atlantic Wall" with almost unlimited slave labour directed by the finest experts on fortification that the German staff schools could produce. To capture Boulogne or Calais, Dieppe or Cherbourg, Allied troops would have to pass over a stretch of water and a beach defended by the best and most expertly placed artillery; over underwater obstacles and a carpet of beach mines; and through a wall of concrete emplacements manned by thousands of well-armed and well-

trained enemies. Dieppe had shown clearly enough that an attempt at a frontal attack could result in nothing short of massacre.

Moreover, even if the Allies succeeded in taking a port, the Germans would previously have destroyed its piers and mined it so heavily that it would be unusable for months.

"If we cannot capture a port," Mountbatten said brilliantly at a meeting of his staff, "we must take one with us." To turn one of the long shelving beaches on the northern coast of France into a workable harbour it would be necessary to construct floating docks and breakwaters able to resist the force of the currents and the waves as they rose and fell with the tides. Mountbatten and Churchill had been considering this problem since the early part of the war, and Combined Operations had conducted many experiments in the search for a practical solution. However, it was not until Churchill had brought all the weight of his prestige to bear, in a minute to Mountbatten, that answers began to be found. In this minute Churchill said:

"Piers for use on beaches; they must float up and down with the tide. The anchor problem must be mastered. . . . Let me have the best solution worked out. Don't argue the matter. The difficulties will argue for themselves."

Possibly even more difficult than the problem of providing piers was that of protecting them and the beaches of the artificial harbours from the forces of nature. A bad storm might make it impossible to get supplies to the Army at a critical moment in the battle before sufficient stock-piles had been built up to keep the offensive going. To unload supplies on a beach in rough weather, when the wind from the sea is piling the surf on an unprotected shore, is out of the question. Under such conditions, landing-craft and landing-ships would certainly be broken up in the attempt, as they had been at Anzio. A strong sea or a northerly gale would do to the invading army what the *Luftwaffe* never could, that is, cut its lines of communication for days. The expeditionary forces, deprived of ammunition and food, would be annihilated by the enemy. The docks and beaches must, under all circumstances, be adequately protected from waves and sea.

In June 1943 no concrete programme had been agreed on for the invasion, although it was scheduled to take place in less than a year's time. Three months later there was to be a meeting in Quebec, between the Combined Chiefs of Staff, Roosevelt and Churchill. By then the plans for the forthcoming invasion must be completed. Mountbatten saw the need for a conference to ascertain, before Quebec, what progress had been made and generally to study the Combined Operations problems

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which would arise in the invasion. In brief, the purpose of the meeting was to answer the general question, "What is required to assault the coast of France?" This conference, known under the code name "Rattle", was held in Scotland and was attended by the Commanders-in-Chief Home Forces, Fighter Command, and Portsmouth; Lieut.-General Morgan, who had been appointed Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander; the General Commander of the Canadian Forces; the Commanding General of United States Forces in the European Theatre; the American Admiral commanding the U.S. Navy in the European Theatre; and the Commanding General of the U.S.A.A.F. in Europe, as well as representatives of the three Service Ministries of Combined Operations.

The idea of a sheltered anchorage had been first discussed early in 1942 at Combined Operations Headquarters when Captain Hussey followed up a Russian idea for a "bubble breakwater". The principle was that of reducing the force of waves to a minimum by blowing bubbles of air through them. This could be accomplished by forcing compressed air through a long perforated pipe lying on the ocean floor. An alternative idea, originated by the British, was to reduce the force of waves by anchoring enormous sausage-shaped waterproof bags, half inflated with air, so they would float ten feet below the surface of the water and twenty feet above. When these were struck by waves rolling in from the sea they would absorb most of the shock. This was named the "Lilo" breakwater. Another scheme recommended by Captain J. Hughes-Hallet, Mountbatten's chief naval planner at the conference, was to make breakwaters out of sunken merchant ships. This was to be tried only if the "Lilo" and "Bubble" breakwaters proved impractical. As there was such a shortage of every sort of ship, it was thought that any suggestion to sink tonnage to serve merely as breakwaters would not be received with enthusiasm.

Many decisions were made at "Rattle" on the methods of assaulting beaches; on the need for a preliminary heavy air bombardment of the areas to be assaulted; on the need for underwater pipe-lines; and on the mobilization of all transportation and every port in southern England for the invasion. But most important of all was Mountbatten's success in getting the conference to agree that artificial harbours were essential in supplying the invasion forces, irrespective of weather conditions or the capture of ports. No decision was reached, however, on the form the breakwaters should take, for the best way to shelter a beach from the force of the sea had not yet been determined by extensive experimentation. The characteristics of waves along the French coast had not yet been seriously investigated, so it was not known exactly what velocities the breakwaters would have to resist, but experiments were begun immediately.



Material and transportation began to be mobilized as Churchill, the Chiefs of Staff and Mountbatten prepared for the Quebec conference, where the final decisions on the invasion of the Continent were to be made. They were to cross to Canada on the *Queen Mary*. One person who accompanied them remarked, "My orders to attend the conference were so secret that I did not dare read them myself."

The group which was to attend the conference was very small and select. Even Lord Charwell (formerly Professor Lindeman, one of the leading scientists of England), who acted during the war as special Scientific Adviser to Churchill, was not of the party. During this period, when every motion at the high level of the Service was wrapped in a conspiratorial cloak of secrecy and tremendous importance, Professor Bernal, the most distinguished of the scientists whom Mountbatten had brought into Combined Operations Headquarters, was summoned into his office. "I am anxious for you to take a trip to Canada," Mountbatten told Bernal.

"Why?"

"I can't possibly tell you why, but it is vital that you go."

Bernal prepared for the journey, wondering whether Mountbatten had been working too hard lately, for he had had no vision of the scroll of coming events that was to be unrolled at Quebec. He was even more confused when he boarded the *Queen Mary*, then a large unnamed ship painted grey, to find himself in the company of crowds of refugees and Canadian wives with screaming babies. The only reason he thought there must be something big afoot was that large signs in Dutch had been plastered everywhere as a security blind. The signs, Bernal thought, were too obviously spurious. After all the Canadian wives and refugees had come aboard, a familiar face with a cigar, followed by others of the most famous faces in England, passed up the gangway a few minutes before sailing.

For the first two days of the crossing Bernal was left to the company of the Canadian wives and their children and to the mercy of a gnawing unsatisfied curiosity about happenings on the top decks.

On the second day out Mountbatten called Captain Hussey into his cabin to say to him: "I have a feeling that everything is not going quite right with regard to our plans for the invasion. Things don't seem to be moving fast enough and we are working on a too narrow time-margin for the invasion as it is. You had better get hold of Bernal and plan to demonstrate some of the problems in the establishment of an artificial harbour at the Chiefs of Staff meeting tomorrow morning and see if we can't get some immediate action on the plan, and tell him to get his hair cut first!"

That evening after dinner Mountbatten skilfully brought up the

subject of artificial harbours and expatiated on the complexity of the problems that had to be solved in designing and constructing them. Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff showed their interest and wanted to know more about them. "I believe by some chance there happens to be a professor aboard this ship who may be able to throw some light on the problem for us," said Mountbatten shamelessly. "How about having him come in and give us some information on the harbours tomorrow morning at our Chiefs of Staff meeting?"

This suggestion was accepted as sound. In the meantime, Bernal and Hussey were puzzling out how to explain the "Lilo" breakwater to the Chiefs of Staff the next day. It is difficult to convince a group of sceptical people in cold blood that it is practical to minimize the force of a wave by appending to it a large semi-inflated half-submerged sausage-shaped bag full of air, however reasonable it may be scientifically. Hussey and Bernal were still worrying about the presentation of the subject, looking gloomily out of a port-hole, when they saw a soldier walk by on the deck outside wearing a flat inflatable lifebelt around his waist. This was standard equipment and every passenger was supposed to wear one, but only the more timid actually did after the first twenty-four hours. The sight of this lifebelt gave them both an idea. A little while later they were busy dismembering one.

The next morning Bernal and Hussey went to the Chiefs of Staff meeting armed with a blackboard and the inside tube of a life-preserver. First Mountbatten sketched the background of the "Lilo", then Hussey demonstrated on the blackboard its military applications, and finally Bernal spoke on the theory of waves, their potential and so forth.

Everybody was relieved when Hussey finally said, "And now, gentlemen, we shall proceed to the bathroom for a demonstration." Without demur the Chiefs of Staff crowded into the bathroom, the bath was filled and the tube inflated. Then Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound, the First Sea Lord, was allowed to make waves at one end of the bath, while Air Chief Marshal Portal held the air-inflated rubber tube across it half-way down its length. Generals Sir Alan Brooke and "Pug" Ismay, with Mountbatten, watched the waves, reduced to ripples after encountering the rubber tube, roll on and splash gently against the porcelain sides at the other end.

The demonstration was a brilliant success. "Pug" Ismay recommended to the Chiefs of Staff that Bernal and Hussey "go across the corridor and show the idea to Winston".

Churchill's secretary kept them waiting for a moment in the outer hall and then they were ushered into the Prime Minister's cabin. They found him sitting up in bed dictating letters and smoking a large cigar as usual. Hussey explained how the breakwater worked, illustrating his talk

with all sorts of curves on the blackboard, and Churchill constantly interrupted by asking shrewd questions such as: "And how much will you need, how long does the breakwater have to be?" "How long does it take to produce this breakwater?" Hussey and Bernal were a little vague in answering these questions, which were getting out of their field and into that of the Planning and Production Board set up at the "Rattle" conference under the multi-millionaire industrialist, Sir Harold Wernher. After Churchill had kept up this fire of embarrassing questions for some time, Hussey thought he might relieve the situation by uttering the magic words, "Would you care to step into the bathroom for a demonstration?"

Churchill's eyes twinkled. He declined, but said, "Will you and Professor Bernal be so kind as to write me a minute on the subject of these remarkable breakwaters for the Chiefs of Staff tomorrow?"

The next twenty-four hours were spent by a naval officer and a professor in trying to compose a minute such as they imagined the Prime Minister might write, sustained by warm towels applied to the forehead and quantities of drink. The minute, with only a few changes, was presented to the Chiefs of Staff the next day, and such importance was attached to the whole programme for the "Lilo" breakwater and the artificial harbours that a message marked "Immediate" was radioed to England with instructions that members of the Planning and Production Board, headed by Wernher, were to be flown immediately to Quebec.

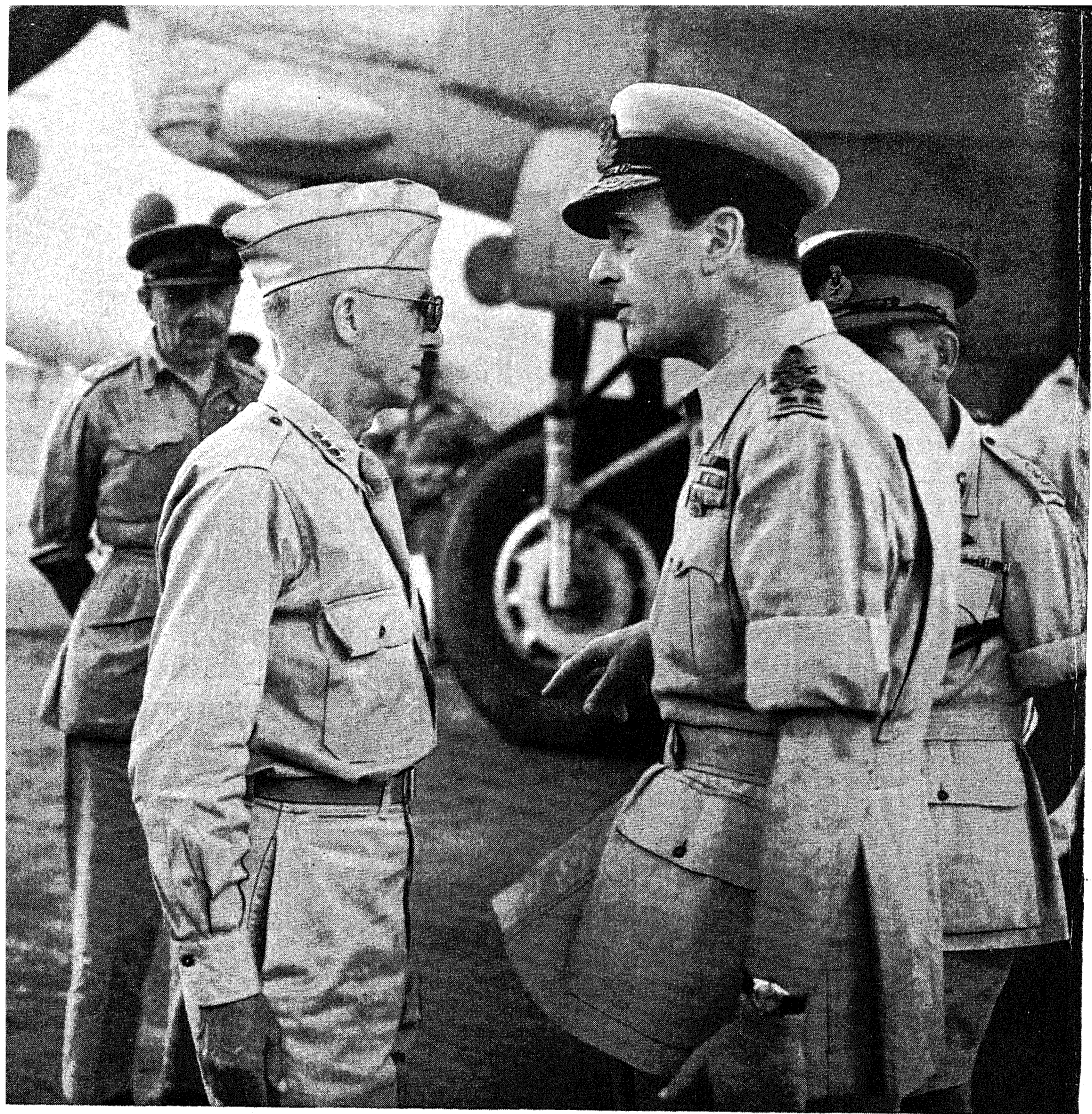
Another message was radioed to Washington to ask that a special group of Army engineers be sent from Washington for consultation and that the matter of the artificial harbours be put on the agenda of the next meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The first meeting of Wernher's board with the group of Army engineers from Washington proved clearly enough that things were going too slowly at a time when speed was vital. Wernher and his committee had been able to accomplish little because of insufficient authority to requisition the necessary resources. Members of Mountbatten's Combined Operations staff gave him a report on the meeting the next morning in his bath at seven. As a result, the plan was changed and it was decided that the burden of experimentation was to be borne in the United States, where there were more facilities, including bath-tubs, and that she should assume also larger responsibilities for production. A joint Anglo-American board was set up under the Colonel who had headed the committee of United States Army Engineers. Shortly after this both boards moved to Washington, where they established a schedule for "Mulberry", allotting time for experimentation, production and transportation, and working by time rather than by results, so that everything



*[U.S. Signal Corps]*

En route to the Ledo hospital



*[British Official photo*

Being greeted by Vinegar Joe Stilwell in Northern Burma

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should be completed in the period set by the Chiefs of Staff for D-Day, May 1944, seven months ahead.

On D-Day plus one in South-East Asia, when Mountbatten was faced with the usual task allotted to commanders in that orphaned theatre, of trying to carry on an offensive in the face of official discouragement and inadequate material, he received the following telegram:

“Today we visited the British and American Armies on the soil of FRANCE. We sailed through vast fleets of ships with landing-craft of many types pouring more and more men, vehicles, and stores ashore. We saw clearly the manoeuvre in process of rapid development. We have shared our secrets in common and helped each other all we could. We wish to tell you at this moment in your arduous campaign that we realize that much of this remarkable technique and therefore the success of the venture has its origin in developments effected by you and your staff of Combined Operations.

“Signed:

ARNOLD,	KING,
BROOKE,	MARSHALL,
CHURCHILL,	SMUTS.”

## CHAPTER VI

### PHOENIX COMMAND

WHEN Mountbatten went to Quebec he did not realize that ahead of him lay a job as unpleasant as one of those dreams of having to walk a tight-rope across a pit of alligators, balancing three eggs on the top of a billiard cue. The problems and difficulties that lined his horizon, however, were revealed to him only gradually.

At the time when the *Kelly* was sinking off Crete, the Japanese had begun to launch "the greatest land grab in history". The attack on Pearl Harbour was the first great strategic blow struck by Nippon in her effort to turn the Orient, from an area dominated largely by Western interests, into the Empire of Japan. After she believed she had permanently crippled American naval strength in the Pacific, she advanced on the Philippines. At the same time she launched from Siam a force which marched down Malaya and seized the great British naval base at Singapore, which she needed to protect her gains in the South-West Pacific from interference in the west and to give her a base for her attack on the Netherlands East Indies. Her next move was to sweep into Burma from adjacent Siam and, by advancing along the southern coast, seal off the country from her channel of supply, the sea. By seizing Burma she hoped to gain a barrier with which she could isolate China from Western aid and protect her conquests in South-East Asia from a land attack.

The wisdom of Japan's strategy is more comprehensible when one realizes that Burma, by virtue of her terrain, is a natural fortress. The Japanese entered Burma from the south-east, the only easy entrance to the country. To the north-east and to the west, where the country borders on India, the bastions protecting her land approaches are range after range of great mountains, assuming, in plan, the shape of a gigantic A. At the base of the A lies the Bay of Bengal. Moreover, the mountains of this fortress land are covered with the thickest jungles on earth, which, to the soldier, appear like a germ's-eye-view of a mould culture. Massive trees, gigantic palms, bamboo thickets and heavy creepers form a writhing curtain of verdure congenial only to the leech, tick and malarial mosquito. Between the mountain bastions lie the central plains with their paddy fields, their riverways, and their natural resources of oil and ore.

The Japanese, in conquering this fortress land, swept westward along the coast, pushing the weakened British forces back from the sea, the only avenue of supply and reinforcement. When they, in their headlong advance, had finally managed to overwhelm the garrisons at Rangoon,

they secured not only the capital of the country and its largest port, but destroyed the last chance the Allies had of holding Burma.

Now it was up to the two British divisions and the poorly trained and equipped Chinese forces, which the Generalissimo had sent down to hold open the Burma Road, to fight a protracted delaying action while they were being inexorably forced back a thousand miles through jungles and over mountains into India and Burma. The appalling hardships faced by the Allies in that retreat constitute one of the most terrible chapters in the history of the war. The British managed to fight doggedly an ever-losing battle against continuous infiltration, sudden road blocks, and the increasing burden of wounded, whom they refused to abandon. The general confusion was heightened not only by the 400,000 odd Indian and Burmese evacuees fleeing from the tyranny of the Japanese, but also by the continuous sabotage practised by gangs of fifth columnists who swarmed up from all sides at the news of Japanese successes.

One of the figures to flash into international prominence during this disastrous retreat was the American, General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell. He first received public attention when Roosevelt sent him and a small staff of Americans to China, at the request of the Generalissimo, who wished him to act as his Chief of Staff and train the Chinese army. No sooner had Stilwell arrived in Chungking than he was also placed in command of the Chinese forces in Burma. The story of how he and his staff retreated from that country over 140 miles of mountains into India is already a part of history, as is the story of how he later returned at the head of a Chinese army which he himself had trained.

It took approximately 100 days for the Japanese to secure an area about as large as Germany and reach the limit of their offensive along the 700 miles of mountains which divide Burma from India. Had they been able to follow up their advance and chase their retreating adversaries into India, another 100 days might have spelled even greater disaster. Fortunately, however, the beginning of the summer brought the end of the Allied retreat and the beginning of the monsoon—five months of torrential rains which turned the whole of the frontier into a mass of mud, scarred with swollen streams—making the mounting of a further Japanese offensive impossible. This five months gave the British time to consolidate their frontier defences and to reorganize their regiments, which they did with little left but small arms, rage and guts.

Stilwell, upon arrival in India, began at once to establish training areas for his Chinese troops with a view to the eventual reopening of a land route to China across northern Burma. General Sir Archibald Wavell, British Commander-in-Chief in India, also used the lull in operations to prepare a comeback. The British Commander, however, had the great



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problem not only of securing the 700-mile Burma-India boundary against possible attack but also of seeing that there was a strategic distribution of forces along India's 4,000-mile shoreline, for Japan now had command of the sea. Not only did he have to contend with the problem of distributing his troops, limited both in number and experience, but also that of safeguarding the country internally against disturbances by the Hindu Congress Party, whose leaders had made it quite clear they were more anxious to see the British out of India than the Japanese. With these handicaps, Wavell planned two limited operations against the enemy during the late autumn and winter of 1942 and 1943. Both were made more in the face of despair than in the hope of success.

The first of these was a limited offensive down the Arakan, an area along the coast of Burma bordering on India. The advance was to be made down the Mayu peninsula and reinforced by small-scale amphibious assaults. The right flank of the attacking forces was to be protected by the sea, and the left by a high range of mountains which runs like the spine of a dragon down the centre of the peninsula. At first the attack was successful and the advance down the coast met with only limited resistance. Suddenly the Japanese counter-attacked through a pass in the mountains and, falling on the British flank, managed to bisect it. Stiff fighting followed, but the situation for the British was hopeless. The troops had neither the training nor the numbers to combat the fanatical, highly trained forces of the Rising Sun. Those who had been cut off were evacuated by sea and the rest retreated back to a line south-east of Chittagong, to defend this approach to India.

The only thing that can be said for this campaign was that the British had taken the initiative against the Japanese for the first time and, by so doing, had at last deprived the Nipponese army of its most valuable asset—surprise. As in most experiments which fail, there were some valuable lessons learned. The most important was that, if the forces of the Emperor were ever to be beaten, malaria must be beaten first, for, although there were over 2,500 actual battle casualties, even greater toll resulted from the noxious attacks of the malarial mosquito. The second was that the greatest advantage the Japanese infantry had over their adversary was their superior mobility. It was possible for a Japanese infantryman to walk thirty miles a day and subsist on a third of the food necessary to the British soldier. This made all the difference in jungle warfare and it became, consequently, of prime importance to find some way to counteract this advantage.

The other operation launched by Wavell that season was the sending of a force of some 3,000 men, under cover of the jungles, into the heart of Burma in an effort to disrupt Japanese communications. This force was to be supplied by air with food and ammunition, thereby

nullifying the necessity of a vulnerable line of communication and achieving a mobility even superior to that of the Japanese. It was to be led by the author of this new concept of jungle warfare, Brigadier Charles Orde Wingate, a man who had earned Wavell's confidence at the beginning of the war by the success he had had in Abyssinia in forming guerilla units used in terrorizing the Italians. Wavell was present when Wingate and his troops set out from Imphal on a twelve-week march through a thousand miles of trackless jungle, destroying bridges, dynamiting rail communications, and finally returning the way they had come, leaving behind them a country alive with Japanese patrols looking for a secret army. Only a third of those men who had marched out of India staggered back, and these were clothed in rags, riven with disease, exhausted, thirsty and hungry. They were, however, living proof that air supply could play a vital part in the defeat of the jungle and the enemy.

Wingate and his men returned just before the monsoon season, which was to call a five-month recess to all major operations on both sides. Those five summer months of 1943 were to be devoted by both armies to feverish preparations for the coming fighting season, which was to prove the decisive phase of the Burma campaign.

Wavell was posting his troops, Stilwell training his Chinese forces for a push that coming autumn into northern Burma; Wingate was planning longer and longer penetrations into enemy territory, while the war leaders in London and Washington were spending more and more time trying to decide how best to effect the defeat of the Japanese on the continent of Asia. MacArthur's technique of island-hopping had not yet achieved spectacular results, and there were many who believed the road to Japan did not lie across the Pacific but across China. At that time the command set-up in South-East Asia was so complicated and diffused that co-ordinated theatre-wide action was impossible. General Stilwell was in command of the Chinese army in Burma and American land and air forces in China; while Wavell, as Commander-in-Chief in India, was commanding all British and Indian troops fighting in Burma. Sea power, as represented by the British Eastern Fleet, had its headquarters not in India but at Kilindini in East Africa. It now became clear that an integrated command, patterned closely on that of General Eisenhower's in North Africa, was essential. At meetings with the Chiefs of Staff in the months prior to the Quebec Conference Churchill brought up the subject of a Supreme Allied Commander for South-East Asia. Every name put forward was rejected because it was unacceptable either to the Americans or to one or other of the fighting Services. No decision had been reached at the time the *Queen Mary* crossed the Atlantic with her passengers for the Quebec Conference.

—During the crossing Admiral Sir Dudley Pound used to visit the

bridge every morning to chat with the captain and see how the ship was progressing, and every morning he would find Mountbatten there before him exclaiming on the quality of the salt air, on how much he enjoyed being on the bridge of a ship at sea. This was subtle propaganda on his part that he be next appointed to a sea command, for he knew that his tenure as Chief of Combined Operations was over. As there was to be no more raiding of the Continent, no more experimentation with the technique of invasion, his future lay either in command of a cruiser squadron or in a purely administrative appointment on shore.

Mr. Churchill, however, had other plans. After spending his first two days in America visiting President Roosevelt in Hyde Park, he set out for Quebec, arriving in time for the first plenary session of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

It is reported that Churchill took Mountbatten out on the battlements of the Citadel after the meeting. Quebec lay below them, stretching away into fading light, and abruptly Churchill asked Mountbatten what he thought of South-East Asia.

"They tell me the situation out there is a terrible mess," said Mountbatten.

"Well, I want you to go out there," said Churchill.

"What good could I do, on a junket like that?" asked Mountbatten.

Churchill gave an impatient puff at his cigar. "I mean," he said, "I want you to go out there as Supreme Allied Commander. Do you think you could take care of the job?"

"You know, sir," said Mountbatten, when he had recovered from the shock, "it is a congenital weakness with me to think I can do anything, but if I am to take the job I must have your assurance that every one of the American as well as the British Chiefs of Staff supports my appointment."

Churchill assured him that this was so and he agreed to accept it.

Whether this story is true or not the fact remains that Mountbatten's appointment was most unexpected and was certainly kept secret from everyone save the Chiefs of Staff. Announcement of it was not made until some days after this conversation is said to have occurred, but one or two of the more prescient members of the conference had noted a subtle change in the demeanour of the late Chief of Combined Operations. Admiral Charles Lambe, who was there as Director of Naval Plans, and an old friend of Mountbatten, took him aside after a conference and said to him, "Dickie, I suspect you are trying to hide something."

"What do you mean?" asked Mountbatten, all outward innocence.

"Well, in the past six days you have done nothing at the meetings at which assault craft have been allocated to various Commands but make recommendations for quantities to be sent to South-East Asia."

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You have also recommended that British crews be sent to replace the Indian crews for the craft already there. Before this, whenever that part of the world has come up for discussion you have recommended that the least possible allocations of personnel and equipment be made to that area. Have you been appointed Supreme Allied Commander?"

Mountbatten laughed. "Maybe," he said.

The formation of the South-East Asia Command made it necessary for Churchill to change round other appointments in India. He appointed Wavell, of whose military ability he had some reservations, as Viceroy; and General Auchinleck, whom he had removed from command in North Africa, to replace Wavell as Commander-in-Chief. As Mountbatten was responsible for all military operations outside the boundaries of India, Auchinleck's job was limited to a training rather than an operational command. If by this stroke Churchill was able to solve to his own satisfaction the problem of distributing appointments and limiting authority, he did not simplify Mountbatten's task by making him the first Commander in history to operate from a base which was not under his command. Fortunately, the fact that Auchinleck and Mountbatten got along very well saved a situation which might otherwise have proved disastrous.

Churchill brought forward another scheme at the conference which, for Mountbatten, was to prove itself a questionable asset. This project took palpable form in the person of Brigadier Wingate, who had been invited to the conference with a view to planning further long-range penetration operations behind the Japanese lines. He had captivated the imaginations of both Churchill and Mountbatten with the originality and daring of his march out of Imphal the winter before. There can be little doubt that they were as impressed with the man as they were with his accomplishments, for they both backed Wingate's plans for future operations and helped him sell them to the Chiefs of Staff.

Mountbatten was to find Wingate (who was now given special powers to appeal directly to the Prime Minister if his plans were in any way obstructed) definitely an added responsibility. There is no reason to suppose that he ever weakened in his admiration of Wingate's very great and unusual qualities, but he had certainly taken on a difficult colleague, for among other things Wingate had a Messianic complex. He saw himself as a man with a mission, another Clive of India or Lawrence of Arabia. It was this trait that gave him the self-confidence which often astonished people. When Wingate was invited by Churchill to the Quebec Conference he insisted on bringing his wife, although no other representative did so. His impatience and ill-temper when he ~~construed~~ any question as an obstruction to his ideas soon became

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generally known. He is said to have gone as far as to threaten to report Lieutenant-General Slim commanding the Fourteenth Army to the Prime Minister for obstruction. He was also an eccentric and was often to be seen walking about headquarters in a rumpled bush jacket with an unkempt beard, munching raw onions as another might an apple, or carrying a jangling alarm clock on a chain "to remind people that time was passing". Once, after being reprovved for being too demanding and too autocratic, he sent a letter of apology to Mountbatten in which he said, "In the future I will combine the wisdom of the serpent with the gentleness of the dove." But he never did.

At Quebec Mountbatten was also given a staff and a directive. General Marshall assigned to him as his Deputy Chief of Staff an American officer in whom he had the greatest confidence, Major-General Albert C. Wedemeyer. Mountbatten had as his Chief of Staff an Englishman, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall, who, as an expert military man and brilliant mediator, had the job of playing Senior Statesman to the command by grooming Mountbatten for his task.

His Commanders-in-Chief for the three Services were also British. They were General Sir George Giffard, commanding all ground forces, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, directing all air operations, and Admiral Sir James Somerville, in command of the Eastern Fleet. If some evil genius had plotted to collect together three individuals less adapted by their various dispositions, backgrounds, and attainments, to get along with their Commander, he could not have chosen three better men. In the first place they were all senior to Mountbatten by many years of service, and by the hierarchy of the Services seniority is respected as highly as the sanctity of the Grail was respected by the Crusaders. Giffard had distinguished himself by leading the British forces in the East African jungle campaign against the Germans in World War I, when Midshipman Battenberg was playing the part of principal girl in a pantomime aboard H.M.S. *Lion*. Peirse had the reputation of being the greatest air tactician alive when Lieutenant Mountbatten was joking with his Cambridge friends in the Pitt Club. Somerville had been planning Fleet strategy in the Mediterranean when Commander Mountbatten was training his boat crews to win the Fleet Regatta. If he dreaded the conflicts which might arise between himself and his Commanders-in-Chief, Mountbatten must also have been concerned about his future relations with the senior American general in the theatre, "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell. He knew Stilwell's position to be as complex as an atomic equation. First, he had been appointed at Quebec Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, which meant that he would have a full-time job on his hands keeping touch with all military developments throughout the theatre. It also meant that he always be present at headquarters with

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Mountbatten. At the same time he occupied the post of Chief of Staff to Chiang Kai-shek and should at all times look on himself as a Chinese general devoted entirely to the Generalissimo's interests in Chungking. He was also Operational Commander of the Northern Combat Area and as such must be always in the field commanding his troops, fighting the Japanese in the north of Burma. As if these responsibilities were not enough, he was chief Lend-Lease Administrator for China, Burma and India. The only advantage Stilwell gained by his complex duties was that he could sometimes give himself orders.

If the new Supreme Allied Commander left Quebec with a complicated and in many ways unsatisfactory command set-up, his directive, at least, was clear. He was ordered by the Combined Chiefs of Staff to devote every possible resource within his command (which included within its boundaries Burma, Assam, Malaya, Sumatra and Siam) to the support of China by the building up of an air route from northern India; to aim towards the eventual reopening of the Burma Road, and to undertake more vigorous operations against the Japanese.

After the Quebec Conference Mountbatten spent a month in London trying to organize his personal staff, examining as fully as possible the problems of his command and laying plans to resolve them. His attitude to the job which lay ahead was indicated in the reply made to an old friend, who asked him whether he was not frightened by his task, that it would take at least a genius to make it any worse. Indeed, judging from the picture he was able to get of his new command by talking to various high-ranking officers recently returned from the Burma front, this was no exaggeration. The Allied forces were clinging precariously to the north-eastern approaches to India with weak supply lines scarcely adequate for purposes of defence, much less of attack, while the Japanese controlled the whole of South-East Asia from the Himalayas to the southern islands of New Guinea. For two years the Allied forces, facing the armies of the yellow Emperor from India, had been continuously defeated on land, sea, and in the air. It is little wonder if the morale of these troops had been shaken, if not shattered. It does not take much of an effort to imagine how an Englishman, an American or an Indian must have felt stuck away in a camp in the midst of the jungle with no regular mail service, short leave and no facilities for enjoying it, no movies, not much news of what was happening on their own or any other front, no amenities and an acute shortage of every type of equipment. What was worse, they were getting into the state of mind where they were beginning to believe the propaganda, heard night after night over the Japanese radio, proclaiming the invincibility of the armies of the Rising Sun. The slant-eyed soldier, sitting on the next ridge, was somehow invincible, indestructible. Mountbatten would have to destroy this myth of the Jap

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superman and plant in the mind of the average soldier a conviction of victory to replace the certainty of defeat. In considering this problem he resolved to tour the front as often as possible and to establish a troop newspaper which could be dropped by air each day all along the Burma frontier. He believed that the morale of the troops at the front would be greatly improved if they could get the theatre news and the news on the other battle fronts.

The next decision he made was to draw plans for continuing operations through the monsoon season.

During five months of every year the rains sweep from the Bay of Bengal and cascade in perpetual downpour over the mountains of Burma, washing away roads, causing rivers to overflow, and making flying conditions unbelievably difficult. Mountbatten learned that it was the custom of both Allied and Japanese Commands to consider the season of the south-west monsoon as closed to military operations, so that serious campaigning was restricted to six or seven months in the year. This seemed to him a mistake. He determined that the Allies should carry on the war just as hard during the monsoon as in the dry season, and by so doing gain the advantage accruing to the side that fights on when the other is expecting a temporary truce.

One of his greatest problems was that of disease. Looking over the casualty figures of the theatre, very much as he had looked over the casualty figures of his raids on the Continent, he learned that there was a higher death rate from disease than from enemy action. So, while in London, he set about establishing a Medical Advisory Division. Its function was to take up disease prevention measures for his troops and, at the same time, advise him on what were the most insalubrious sections of Burma into which the Nipponese might be lured, so he could turn their lack of medical supplies to his advantage. "The Japs, who have nothing, will have to fight Nature instead of us," he said.

During those hectic days in London there was one problem which Mountbatten, as a member of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, must have been fully aware of, but which, in his optimism, he must have believed he could eventually overcome. It was the fact that his theatre was the lowest on the priority list, and, although he surmounted every other obstacle in his theatre, the South-East Asia Command remained lowest on the priority list to the last. Therefore, possibly Mountbatten's greatest task was keeping up his own morale as well as that of his troops in the face of the necessity of continually building up resources in the Pacific and in Europe at the expense of his theatre. On one occasion this even went to the extent of ordering back to the European theatre all 5·5 ammunition, at a time when it was believed to be the only answer to the Japanese fox-hole.

But there were some lighter matters to occupy Mountbatten's mind in London. One of these was the design for a flash (or identifying sleeve insignia) for his headquarters, and this, with his customary thoroughness, he attended to himself. He had already been responsible for the design of insignia for his wife's St. John Ambulance uniform—crossed stretchers surmounted by a crown—and also for the flash for Combined Operations, a design in blue and gold in which were incorporated the insignia of the three Services: Air Force wings, an infantryman's rifle, and a naval anchor.

For his new headquarters Mountbatten decided on a circular flash. In the centre, against a white ground, was displayed a circle of red, the emblem of Japan, out of which a blue sword was cutting a slice. It was a striking design and he and his staff were very pleased with it. Before final approval it had to be sent around to various departments, competent to deal with such delicate questions, to find out whether the design held any profane or odious implication for any of the Allies. First it went to the India Office, where it was studied to see if it held any esoteric meaning for Mahratta or Madrassee, Sikh or Bengalee, then to the Burma Office to be examined in the same way. Next Dr. Wellington Koo, the Chinese Ambassador, vouchsafed his approval, and after various other responsible persons had looked below its red, white and blue surface for latent insults and secret blasphemies, the design was approved and dispatched to looms in America, where a million were to be woven.

Hardly had the order been given when a man from the Foreign Office, who had spent most of his life in Japan, happened to see the design in the office of one of Mountbatten's staff. When he was told its purpose he said: "Good heavens, you can't use that! Why, any Japanese who captured an Ally with that flash on would interpret it as meaning the defamation of the sacred emblem of Japan and they would undoubtedly subject him to the most horrid tortures."

When Mountbatten heard this he was sceptical, but said, "If there is even a remote chance that the design may cause anybody to be tortured we shall have to change it," and a radiogram was immediately dispatched to America countermanding the order to the weavers.

By this time he was beginning to lose interest in the flash, so Mr. Dening, who was shortly to go to the East as his political advisor, was consulted for ideas. He suggested that the phoenix might be a proper symbol for the headquarters as the bird was esteemed of good omen throughout SEAC Area Command, and was also the symbol of a virtuous ruler. (When the suggestion was passed on to Mountbatten, Virtuous was changed to Victorious.) Mountbatten approved the symbol but its incorporation in the design was not a simple matter, for nobody seemed to know what a phoenix looked like. Mountbatten would quote to his



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staff cheerfully, "The Phoenix, one might almost say, was the burning question of its day."

Definitions in dictionaries left something to be desired. The bird was described as mythological and as resembling a wild bittern with the head of a cockatrice, while the cockatrice, a basilisk, as everyone knows, is a fabulous reptile, hatched by a serpent from a cock's egg, whose unpleasant glance and breath are equally deadly to man and beast. All this could be interpreted in a variety of ways. The first design submitted was rejected as the symbolic bird too closely resembled a singed and ruffled American eagle in the act of being consumed by the rays of the Rising Sun.

One of the staff, trying to be helpful, drew Mountbatten's attention to a first edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which had a phoenix on the jacket, but this particular phoenix was hatched by a melancholy and unsatisfactory artistic fancy. Mountbatten called it "Lady Chatterley's Plover" and turned it down flat. Finally the design agreed on showed the bird settling on jagged stylized coals with wings swinging upwards in a neat semi-circle on either side. To ensure the satisfactory execution of the design he spent his last night in England bent over a board, with ruler and compasses, carefully drawing the wings of the phoenix in such a way that its arc of movement should be concentric with the circumference of the flash. Later, when a member of Mountbatten's staff came to London and somebody asked him what the symbol stood for, he replied airily, "Oh, it represents the transition from the futile fumbblings of the past into the flaming fantasy of the future."

On October 4, accompanied by seven members of his staff, he left for South-East Asia in a C-47, lent to him by Churchill, named the *Marco Polo*. The trip was marred by one slight *contretemps*. Mountbatten made a special point of stopping to call on the young King of Irak, and, wanting to present him with a gift suitable for an eight-year-old monarch, instructed his flag lieutenant to purchase a large box of chocolates in Cairo. When he arrived in Bagdad the royal child was on vacation by the seaside but he was received by the Regent, Amir Abdull Illah, the King's uncle. They exchanged politenesses and generalities most cordially. Mountbatten reboarded his 'plane several hours later in an excellent humour and when the 'plane had taken off he turned to his aide remarking, "Well, as we couldn't give the chocolates to the King I might as well eat them."

This assumption was received with consternation: "But I left the chocolates with the Regent!"

"Why did you do that? What would a Regent want with chocolates?" And a few moments later, "Really, I can't see what you think the Regent would want with those chocolates," and the whole way to Karachi was

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measured off by a series of such remarks as, "I really can't imagine what you thought a Regent could do with those chocolates."

Mountbatten's arrival in New Delhi had the same effect on the desperate and discouraged officers of the India Command as a blast of pure oxygen on a dying fire. Where there had been apathy, inertia and almost defeatism, enthusiasm and interest were soon to manifest themselves. Here, at last, was palpable proof in the person of Mountbatten that the Combined Chiefs of Staff had at last recognized the Burma campaign as no longer a sideshow, but an important theatre in a global war. These men, who remembered the time when, with the enemy in sight of Indian soil, there was not one fully trained and equipped Indian division to defend the land, began to believe for the first time that the Japanese would soon be hurled out of their stolen empire in South-East Asia.

A week after his arrival in New Delhi Mountbatten was on his way to Chungking to see the Generalissimo. His reason for going there almost at once was that he believed it was always necessary to put relations with the Chinese on a personal basis. Moreover, he knew it would add immeasurably to the Generalissimo's face if he showed him the courtesy of calling on him without delay.

He arrived to find that Chiang Kai-shek was in none too good a temper. The Generalissimo expressed his Oriental dissatisfaction by not welcoming Mountbatten until the third day after his arrival. When the meeting did finally come off, both men appeared to be favourably impressed with each other. Lord Louis did his best to dissipate the Generalissimo's ill-will by greeting him with the words: "Sir, I have come directly to see you. I have not even paused in Delhi to collect my staff. I realize that you have been fighting the Jap much longer than any of us, and I know how heavily I shall have to rely upon your counsel."

During his stay in Chungking Mountbatten saved General Stilwell from dismissal by the Chinese commander.

Earlier, when T. V. Soong was passing through London on his way from Washington to China, he had talked with Mountbatten and warned him that he would not be popular with the Generalissimo if he befriended Stilwell. The latter was definitely in disfavour for making it quite clear on every possible occasion what a low opinion he held of the Generalissimo (to whom he would refer in public as "the peanut"), and, for that matter, the whole Kuomintang Government. When Mountbatten reached Chungking he learned from General Somervell, who had come from the United States War Department on behalf of the President to explain the formation of S.E.A.C. to Chiang Kai-shek, that Stilwell had in fact been told to go. Few incidents could cast a more unfavourable light on Mountbatten's new command than the immediate removal of his senior American

general. He therefore urged Somervell to put Stilwell's case before the Generalissimo with intimations that if Stilwell were removed there would be a remarkable drop in the volume of Lend-Lease supplies sent to China. He also decided the dismissal would be more embarrassing to local authority if he returned the visit Stilwell had paid him a few days before.

Mountbatten arrived at the American general's house to find a battery of photographers waiting outside, but when Stilwell came out on the porch to greet him Stilwell refused to allow any pictures to be taken. When they got inside he said, "Admiral, it is sure going to make the Gimo mad when he learns you have paid me a visit, but it would make him a good deal madder if photos were taken of us together at this time."

"Well, then," said Mountbatten, "we shall immediately go out and have some pictures taken."

They walked out again on the verandah, called back the photographers and had many pictures taken of their cordial greeting of one another. When they went in again, the General praised the British Commander's generosity and treated him to a long and rather incisive verbal sketch of his opinion of the Generalissimo. Mountbatten then told Stilwell he did not intend to allow him to be removed but meant to tell the Generalissimo that, were he removed, the Chinese would not be given the aid for which they had asked.

According to reports circulating in Chungking at the time, Stilwell thanked Mountbatten with tears in his eyes. "That's the squarest thing a Britisher has ever done to me," and with that he promised Mountbatten eternal gratitude and loyalty. Over the period of stormy relations that followed, however difficult Stilwell may have been with other British commanders, he never broke his avowal of personal loyalty to Mountbatten.

During the remainder of his stay in Chungking Mountbatten's time was spent in a series of conferences with Somervell and various Chinese and American generals. These consisted largely of expressions of mutual esteem. At the Conferences attended by the Generalissimo, Madame Chiang was invariably present, acting as interpreter for her husband.

Before he returned to New Delhi a banquet was given by the Generalissimo in honour of Mountbatten. It was given in a large barnlike building fitted with a radio and electric light in honour of the occasion. It was an elaborate affair. The Generalissimo wore his best uniform and smiled his well-known Oriental smile, while Madame Chiang played the part of a gracious hostess to perfection. Throughout the many courses, the many toasts, and the many speeches, the electric lights dimmed gradually until the hall was in complete twilight, while the radio, providing sound effects in the background, faded into nothing, until the dynamo supplying

the current gave a hiccup, when the lights would blaze and the radio blare again. These phenomena did not perturb Oriental sensibilities, but they had a somewhat shattering effect on the nerves of the Occidentals present.

After returning to New Delhi, Mountbatten set up a Joint Planning Staff made up of members of the three Services, and instructed them to prepare plans for the coming winter campaign in Burma. During his stay he organized a mess with twenty of his senior officers, in a palace lent him by the Maharajah of Faridkot (which looked rather like a cross between a regal bordello and a Crane Company display room). He remained there, however, the shortest possible time before he was off again, this time to take a tour of the 700-mile-long Burma front. During that tour he tried to address informally as many of his troops as possible.

Gathered closely around him, usually stripped to the waist, hot, perspiring and dirty, Sikh, African, Chinese, British, American, Hindu, Muslim, Naga, and Chin troops would listen to this cool and immaculate figure dressed in khaki. Mountbatten's shirtsleeves would be rolled above his elbows, while on his shoulders were the insignia of a full admiral, plus the intertwining bronze initials ER and GR, showing that he had been aide to two monarchs, Edward VIII, now Duke of Windsor, and George VI, present King of England. They could not help but be impressed by this man who spoke with such assurance of the future and who was able to talk to each one of them about their individual problems—to the flyers about close air support, to the Nagas about the hazards of jungle infiltration, to the Sikhs about Home Rule for India, to the British of the support of those at home. Here was a theatre commander, the troops thought, who comprehended that the soldier was a human being, and not one of those who thought a brigade as nothing more than so many rifles represented by a blue arrow, attached to a pin, stuck in a large-scale map at headquarters.

In his talks to the various troops he visited Mountbatten told of the promises made at the Quebec Conference, that landing craft and fleets of ships were shortly to arrive from Europe. "You have thought of yourselves," he would declare, "as the fighters of a forgotten war, forgotten by the Press and, more important, forgotten by the quartermaster. You are quite wrong about this," he would add with a laugh; "the Burma war has not been forgotten, it has never been heard of." He would point out that the picture had changed and that now victory was in sight, with a short campaign, but, he warned, possibly a bloody one. "If the Japs try their old dodge," he would say, "of infiltrating behind you and cutting your lines of communications, stay put. We will supply you by air. There will be no more retreat." And then he would ask: "Who

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started this story of the Jap superman? I have seen them in Japan. Millions of them are unintelligent slum-dwellers, with no factory laws, no trades unions, no freedom of speech, nothing except an ignorant, fanatical idea that their emperor is God."

Back in New Delhi, after his extensive and exhausting tour, he set about examining the plans which his planning staff had drawn up in his absence and revising them for presentation in November at the Cairo Conference, where Churchill, Roosevelt, the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang, Stilwell and the Combined Chiefs of Staff were to meet to decide on forthcoming strategy in Asia. These plans had been prepared under the double disadvantage of extreme haste and ignorance on the part of the planners, who had come out with Mountbatten without having time to learn of all the difficulties of terrain and transportation peculiar to the Burma war. In spite of these detriments, the plan which Mountbatten finally presented at Cairo was both far-sighted and comprehensive. The amphibious fleet in the theatre was to be used for an assault on the Andaman Islands, lying off the coast of Burma. This was to force the Japanese to withdraw from their outer ring of air and naval bases. At the same time there would be an assault down the Arakan on a much larger scale than the one which had failed the previous year.

From bases in Imphal, situated at about the middle of the front, a British Army corps would start a thrust to cross the Chindwin.

To the north, three related operations were to destroy all Nipponese forces in Upper Burma so that the terrain over which to build a land route to China would be in Allied hands. To effect this, Stilwell, with his Chinese and American Army, was to advance from his bases in Assam down the Hukawng Valley, striking the Japanese forces from the north-east. Simultaneously, a Chinese force, officered by Americans, would strike from Yunnan. These advances were to be complemented by a parachute brigade which would drop on Indaw, reinforced later by a division flown in after the airfield had been secured. Indaw was important, as it was on the main line of Japanese communications to the north.

The seventh operation was to be carried out by General Wingate heading a Long-Range Penetration force that would be flown into the centre of Burma, where their function would be to create a diversion by harassing the enemy's rear and disrupting communications.

Mountbatten was confident that, if this plan was agreed to, he would soon be able to disintegrate whatever resistance the Japanese could offer; and he was also sure that, within a year, Japan would be cast out of her stolen Southern Empire. Mountbatten felt pretty well assured of success, in spite of the fact that no final decision on his plan had been reached before he returned to India and the Combined Chiefs of Staff went on to the Teheran Conference.



Conference at Chungking (Capt. Brockman and Lt.-Gen. Browning in background)





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He did not take into account, however, the unfavourable impression made on the minds of the American Chiefs of Staff, who were almost convinced, at the end of the conference, that the British were doing everything in their power to disperse Allied landing-craft in the Mediterranean and in South-East Asia in order further to postpone, or even to make impossible, the invasion of northern France. They thought Churchill was scheming to send so many craft to the Far East that there would be no resource left but to implement his so-called "soft underbelly strategy" in the Mediterranean, and there would not be sufficient strength available to invade Europe from the north.

Mountbatten's bright picture of the future was shortly to fade away in a mist of broken promises, unfulfilled commitments, and withdrawn resources. His structure of hope began to crumble when news came from Teheran that Stalin, possibly prompted by the Americans, had stated flatly Russia's entry into the war against Japan must be conditioned on the effectiveness of the British and American effort to finish the war in Europe first: and that meant the largest forces available must be hurled against the continent of Europe. Mountbatten was directed to send back to Europe two-thirds of the triphibious resources he had slowly been collecting in the ports of India. As a result he had regretfully to cross the Andamans operation off his list.

This bit of bad news came at the same time as dispatches from all along the Burma front reported small but successful skirmishes with the enemy. From the north came news of Stilwell's troops making steady though not spectacular advances. To the south, in the Arakan, came reports of an even more optimistic nature, for the British Fourteenth Army was steadily advancing down the Mayu Peninsula, despite strong resistance from Nipponese tunnelled defences. The British were operating on a plan whereby the Arakan was to be cleared in a three-valley attack. On the west side of the Mayu range, over which the Japanese had marched the year before, the 5th Division was pushing steadily south. At the same time the 7th Division was making a parallel advance down the Kalapanzin Valley, while the flank was being protected by the 81st West African Division marching down the adjacent Kaladin Valley.

In the meantime the Japanese General Staff had also been plotting for the coming year. Their plan, known as "Operation C", called for a double offensive, which would destroy the Allied land forces in Burma, followed by an invasion of India. Indian traitors had told the Japanese that they would merely have to plant their standards in the soil of India and there would be an immediate uprising, which would result in the "liberation" of 400,000,000 Indians into the co-prosperity sphere of "Asia for the Asiatics".

The scene for Japan's "Operation C" was set in the jagged hills,



swamps, jungles and long grasses of the Arakan. The plan was to divide the British forces in half, then cut their lines of communication to the north. After this had been accomplished they intended to destroy each force separately. Then, after the British had been annihilated, they would advance northward on Chittagong. Its seizure would be the signal for a general uprising in Bengal and the collapse of India.

The first British troops to feel the force of this grand design were the sappers, miners, signallers and other administration troops of the 7th Division, which was camped in an open area (known in military parlance as an "admin. box") behind their lines in the Kalapanzin Valley, protected by a small force large enough to resist any sudden skirmishes, but not sufficiently strong to resist a heavy onslaught. They were certainly not prepared to withstand the blitzkrieg of 8,000 Nipponese, led by the fanatical Colonel Tanahashi, which struck one morning through the dawn mists. It was still dark when the men in the administration base were awakened by the sound of shouts and groans. Suddenly the quiet of the surrounding night was shattered by an ear-splitting yell from a thousand yellow throats, followed by rapid volleys. The first dim light of dawn was enough to show the occupants of the "box" that they had been surrounded. They withdrew, under heavy fire from enemy mortars, to a hill where they took up defensive positions. Should the Division try to retreat? Or should it hold out until all were slaughtered or starved to death? Certainly there were not enough troops near by to relieve the box before the occupants had run out of supplies and ammunition.

The Japanese attack did not halt with the encirclement of the "box". They hurled another force over the steep mountains beyond, and, in a powerful thrust, severed the lightly protected line of communication of the 5th Division. The Nipponese were wildly triumphant. Their success was announced over the Tokyo radio in no uncertain terms. "New British Fourteenth Army destroyed," the radio boasted. "The march on Delhi has begun. We shall be there within a week." ("Not bloody likely," said the Tommies cheerfully; "not with these — Indian railroads they won't.")

The situation was very grave. Mountbatten conferred with General Giffard and General Slim, commander of the Fourteenth Army. They decided that a retreat would be fatal, if not impossible. The garrison must at all costs "stay put". The "box" was sent a radio message that reinforcements were on their way. If Tanahashi had intercepted this message he would have laughed. The spine of mountains, overlooking the valley down which relief troops would have to pass, Tanahashi referred to as a "Fortress given us by Heaven to furnish us with defences, obstructions and concealments". It would take, the Japanese thought, a

huge force, bent on almost complete destruction, to relieve the "box".

The Japanese, however, had forgotten the lesson taught by General Wingate with his Long-Range Penetration Groups. He had said: "Have no lines of communication on the jungle floor. Bring the goods, like Father Christmas, down the chimney."

When the 7th Division was surrounded they had two days' rations. Before these had been exhausted, lumbering transport 'planes, taken by Mountbatten's orders off their usual "Hump" route, were dropping to the beleaguered forces sixty tons of supplies a day ranging from field pieces to copies of the Command's daily newspaper, *SEAC*. Mountbatten had made the sky a supply route.

With the fear of failure the Japanese increased their efforts to destroy the forces in the "box". For the exhausted British soldiers each dawn brought with it the certainty of unrelenting bombardment and renewed attack, while with each dusk came the knowledge that an attempt would be made to infiltrate the British outer ring of defences by crawling through the tall elephant grass. Only once did this succeed. On that occasion they massacred both doctors and patients housed in a temporary hospital. The incident only stiffened the determination of the men in the "box" to resist to the last man.

Twenty days after the fateful morning when the Japanese had first surrounded the "box", what remained of their lines was broken by an armoured column sweeping down from the north. The "box" was relieved and the battle of the Arakan was over. Seven thousand of Japan's crack troops had been killed and 200 of her Zeros had been shot out of the air by the fighters of the R.A.F. The first attempt of the Japanese to invade India had become Japan's first major defeat on land.

If victory in the Arakan gave Mountbatten occasion to rejoice, the flow of messages pouring out of London and Washington was distinctly dampening. Four months earlier, at the Cairo Conference, the Generalissimo had only consented to use his forces for an offensive in Yunnan if there were an amphibious operation against the coast of Burma. Mountbatten had been careful to omit any mention of the scope of this amphibious operation in the Generalissimo's presence, and as soon as he learned that he would have to cancel the Andamans order he had to plan another so-called "dago-dazzler" which he hoped would satisfy the Generalissimo. This entailed the landing of the British 2nd Division in the Arakan, with the object of trapping the Japanese 55th Division between this force and the British 15th Corps, advancing from the north. This he hoped would please the Generalissimo just as much. But after Teheran, Roosevelt radioed the Generalissimo his deep and sincere regrets that the scale of the triphibious operation along the

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Burma coast had had to be reduced. Thereupon the Generalissimo used this information as an excuse for evading his own obligations and cancelling the advance of the Chinese forces in Yunnan. Almost the last straw was laid on him when the Chiefs of Staff ordered Mountbatten to cancel the airborne attack planned on Indaw, as a result of the Generalissimo's decision, but another was added when finally all that remained of his triphibious resources was withdrawn for the major operations in Europe. Three months after taking over the command Mountbatten had made literally no progress and had resources for operations of no more scope than those being undertaken in the theatre before his arrival. All he could undertake with the material now at his disposal was the continuance of a minor offensive in the Arakan, a minor advance of the Chinese forces under Stilwell southwards towards Ledo, and possibly a slight advance by the Army Corps based in the centre of his line towards the River Chindwin. The only operation left to him out of the seven outlined at Cairo was Wingate's Long-Range Penetration. The only reason, it seems, this too was not shorn was that the British Chiefs of Staff wanted Churchill to feel Mountbatten was not being entirely deprived of all the resources promised him at Quebec. Furthermore, Wingate's spectacular operations were assuredly a good morale-builder for the Allies, for they proved that the Japanese could be beaten at their own game—jungle fighting. Their military effectiveness in relation to the men and material expended, however, was always debatable.

During the winter these constant disappointments engendered a sense of resentment and frustration in almost everyone at headquarters except Mountbatten, in whom hope never seemed to die. When the news would come that all landing-craft had to be returned to the European theatre, or that no more British or American replacements could be spared, or that it was impossible to send out any more artillery, he would instruct his planners to work on some new project which would best utilize the limited material available.

On each occasion the new project would be explained by Mountbatten with such enthusiasm, and his versatility and initiative in presenting its possibilities would be so impressive and contagious, that it took him very little time to make the planners and his staff feel the pale imitation was much better than the original.

This genuine resiliency, which he could always justify by quite valid arguments, must have gone far to reconcile the feelings of the officers and men who had shared with him the disillusionment of the exchange, and in the same way it was a potent morale-builder to his staff. He communicated his enthusiasm not only to his staff but to the Command at large, for he was constantly touring the theatre visiting and inspecting troops. The very fact that the average officer is unaware of

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changes in high policy makes the feeling of abandonment resulting from the displacement of the centre of interest to another area mysterious, menacing, and almost unbearable, and it was only too plain that the South-East Asia Command was now the ugly duckling of the Allied barnyard.

One soldier, who had been stationed in an obscure sector of the front, told me that he saw Mountbatten three times in one year. The purpose of his tours was to address personally as many of the troops as he possibly could and he issued a directive stating that informality was to be the keynote of all occasions during these tours. Usually, when a general or a "V.I.P." makes a tour of the front the troops have to get out their best uniforms, shine their buttons, polish their belts, and stage an inspection. All such displays, Mountbatten announced, would be dispensed with. This was unprecedented, but none the less welcome, for it is not easy to look neat and well dressed when the facilities for washing uniforms are confined to muddy rivers and when parades must be held on a dusty parade-ground under a sun that makes the air feel like flame.

On only one occasion did he run into difficulties, and that was when he went to the American sector of the front. Here, when he got up to deliver his short informal talk, he was met by obvious hostility. An officer who had Mountbatten address several groups of Americans said, "The S.A.C. had figuratively to sweat blood to get any sort of favourable reaction out of his audience." The reason for his failure, as it later turned out, was that a well-meaning officer with more zeal than understanding had gone round before him telling the G.I.s how to receive a lord, to laugh politely when he made a joke but otherwise to meet him with silent respect. Malice could have done no better by way of making Mountbatten's job of putting himself over to the troops more difficult.

While he was visiting the American post another incident occurred which indicates the American opinion of an English lord. On returning to his headquarters after visiting the famous Merrill's Marauders at their training area he said that he was put up in an excellent tent with that hen's-tooth rarity in India, a full length bathtub, and expatiated on the wonders of the dinner at the American mess. Later he was astonished to learn that tub and meal had been planned with great effort for his benefit because they were supposed to be the things to which an English lord was used. Needless to say, these special arrangements did not improve the American soldier's opinion of Mountbatten, and perhaps they were not intended to. After this experience he made it a practice to send an officer ahead of him to see that strict informality was observed.

One of these tours produced one of those dreadful puns for which Mountbatten is notorious. He had gone to inspect a secret island naval

base called Adu Atoll, in the centre of the Bay of Bengal. On his return the controls of the 'plane became jammed, just after the take-off, and it was only by a miracle that the pilot was able to pull the 'plane out of a crash and land safely again. His headquarters was informed by radio only that, due to an "unforeseen incident", the Supreme Commander's return would be delayed a couple of hours, but the reason for the mysterious delay was unspecified. When one of his staff asked on his return what had happened he replied casually, "Oh, it was much Adu about nothing Atoll."

Mountbatten's sense of tact and his use of personality to build up morale was never better shown than when he broke the news of a change in plan to the 33rd Indian Corps, which had been training for months for triphibious operations against the Andamans. When this operation was cancelled because his fleet had been ordered to the Mediterranean, Mountbatten considered, at a Supreme Allied Commanders' meeting attended by the Commander-in-Chief of the ground forces, General Giffard, how this news should be broken to the troops. The Commander-in-Chief of the ground forces wanted to keep the men in ignorance of the decision both to deceive the Japanese and to avoid lowering the men's newly regained morale. Mountbatten overruled him on the ground that the men must be told, for nothing would be worse for their morale than to find they had been deceived. He also took the view that if the men were given the information in strict confidence they could be trusted to keep a secret.

General Giffard suggested that Mountbatten himself should undertake the unenviable task of breaking this unpleasant piece of news to the men. Busy as he was, Mountbatten immediately undertook to speak to every man in both divisions, about 24,000 in all. It took him three days—addressing 1,000 at a time. Following his usual way of making the men break ranks and gather around the ammunition box on which he stood, he addressed them in these terms:

"I have come to bring you very good news. I am sure you all realize that until the war against Germany is ended we cannot possibly expect to get the great resources in ships, men, and aircraft necessary for the complete and utter defeat of Japan. Therefore, until we can begin to see the end of the war in Europe, we cannot even measure how much longer we are going to be kept out here.

"Furthermore, the longer the war goes on in Europe, the greater the risks to which our families at home will be exposed from air attacks. You have all been rehearsing for a great triphibious assault. I know that you have been looking forward to a chance to get at the enemy after your long period of waiting in reserve, and that if this-

were your only consideration you would all be disappointed to hear that your great assault is to be postponed.

"But when I tell you that the reason is none other than that the war in Europe has taken such a favourable turn that the Combined Chiefs of Staff want back every ship and landing-craft they can scrape together in readiness for the great assault on France itself this year, you will rejoice.

"For this means that the war against Germany will be concluded within a year of the launching of the final invasion, and the defeat of Japan will not long be delayed after Germany has fallen. Meanwhile, I can assure you I have every intention of putting you in action against the Japanese, whatever happens, within the next few months."

This speech evoked cheers and applause from the men on every occasion on which it was delivered. So far from suffering a set-back, every commanding officer of the 33rd Indian Corps reported that the morale of his troops had risen to greater heights than ever, and three months later the Corps was fighting hard in Burma with great distinction.

The Arakan campaign was over. Mountbatten was now to concentrate his energies on pushing Wingate's Long-Range Penetration plan, known by its security title as "Operation Thursday". This involved flying 10,000 men and 1,000 pack animals by night into the centre of Burma and debarking them in jungle clearings. Strongpoints, supplied by air, were to be established there in the heart of the enemy, and used as bases for sorties against the Japs. It was believed that these men could so disrupt Nipponese communications that they could materially weaken the forces resisting Stilwell's advance from the north. The plan, as it was put into effect in March 1944, was a great improvement over Wingate's operation of the previous year. The greatest contribution to this improved operation was made as a result of a suggestion from Mountbatten himself, without which, according to Wingate, "the operation could never have been carried out". In a moment of inspiration Mountbatten acquired for Wingate a special air force. At a lunch given him at the War Department in Washington, after the Quebec Conference, General Arnold asked if there were anything he could do to help Mountbatten in his coming campaign. Mountbatten replied that, if it could be arranged, he would like to have a special composite air unit formed to assist General Wingate's Long-Range Penetration Groups. He pointed out that in Wingate's previous operations, traffic into the jungle was strictly one way. Planes could supply his troops by air with ammunition, stores, food, and mail, but they could take nothing out, not even letters. Under such conditions it was better for a member of an expedition to be shot through the head than the foot. If he could not walk he would have to be left

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behind the Japanese lines, with all that such a position implies. Mountbatten asked General Arnold for every known modern device which would make practicable the flying out of wounded from closed-in jungle areas; light aircraft, snatch-off gliders, and helicopters were discussed, and Arnold went even further and said he would send in special airfield engineers, with light bulldozers that could be brought in by gliders to assist the infantry in making clearings to be used as take-off points. In honour of Mountbatten's British Commandos Arnold christened the outfit that was created as a result of that luncheon conversation the first Jungle Commando.

After months of haranguing, arguing, demanding and insisting, Wingate was finally ready to thrust a division of specially trained troops under his command "into the guts of the enemy". On an airfield near the Burma frontier, the gliders which were to carry this force were carefully loaded with fighting and signal units, artillerymen and their guns. Also put aboard were engineer units equipped with bulldozers and other devices to transform rude jungle clearings into airfields. These engineer units were to be flown in twenty-four hours before the main force. Their job was to spend the daylight hours turning the three clearings on which they would land into airstrips. The following night the main force would be flown in to these clearings hundreds of miles behind the enemy lines. Out of the sixty-seven gliders which took off from India that first night early in March, loaded with equipment and personnel, only thirty-seven landed on those clearings in the Burma jungle. Although most of the equipment did not arrive, the engineers on those thirty-seven gliders started out with shovels and picks to perform the tremendous task of levelling, before nightfall, the clearings choked with the wreckage of gliders and fallen trees and deeply scarred with buffalo holes. Through the whole of the next night the roar of aircraft engines could be heard over the jungle clearings, as a squadron of C-47s made 660 sorties to bring in the main part of Wingate's forces. Four days later Wingate's columns were on the march. One headed north to cut the Rangoon-Myitkyina railroad, while another moved south to strike at Indaw, a built-up junction and airfield also on the Rangoon-Myitkyina line. If both were successful, the railroad, which was the only line of communication and supply for the Japanese forces opposing Stilwell's advance further to the north, would be cut in four places. If these forces were cut off, Japan would shortly be driven out of northern Burma. The column marching on Indaw managed to make its way there through trackless jungles in five days. It was a saga of suffering. There had developed a shortage of water and casualty figures mounted from malaria, scrub typhus, naga sores (jungle rot), and the rest of the diseases of the jungle. The exhausted column arrived at Indaw to find the Japanese waiting for

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them in elaborate defences. Attempt after attempt was made to fight through the enemy entrenchments, but each sortie was met with progressively heavier fire. As they were not equipped to fight a pitched battle, Wingate's men finally had to retreat back into the jungle.

To the north the other column had met with unexpectedly stiff resistance. They first attacked at a point known as "White City", where they found the Japanese already strongly entrenched. Suffering heavy casualties, the attacking force was able to cut through, break the railroad, and retreat back into the jungle, carrying the dead with them; later returning to launch another surprise attack further along the line. They subsequently marched out of the jungle, having performed by sheer heroism and unflagging courage the incredible task of preventing any supplies from going over the railroad for three whole months. But Wingate was not to live to see what was considered by some to be the failure and by others the success of his operation; for shortly after "Operation Thursday" had begun his plane crashed into the side of a mountain, killing all occupants. His command devolved on General Lentaigne, who was then in the field as commander of one of the Long-Range Penetration Groups. Although Wingate was a fanatic, and in the opinion of some a lunatic, the South-East Asia Command lost in him a man who had done much to give confidence to the troops and who had been a powerful exponent of the strategy that revolutionized jungle warfare and caused the ultimate defeat of the Japanese in Burma—Air Supply.

In those months, when the entire strategic reserve of the theatre had been committed to fighting the Japanese behind their own lines, they were executing their most ambitious offensive. A few days after Wingate's last glider took off over the jungles from India the Japanese started their second and greatest attempt to invade India. During the winter months in which Mountbatten was perpetually receiving orders to send more and more material back to the European theatre, Field Marshal Terauchi, Japanese Supreme Commander in South-East Asia, had received reinforcements amounting to seven divisions of crack Imperial troops. He had been ordered to invade India. The plan known as "Operation U" called for India to be invaded through the centre of the Allied line at Manipur. The Japanese proposed to advance from their positions on the Chindwin across the mountains along the Burma frontier. In their advance they would first wipe out the forward divisions at Tiddim and Tamu and then encircle and destroy the garrisons of Kohima and Imphal. Then they would strike thirty miles further westward at Dimapur, junction of the Bengal-Assam railway.

This railway was the only artery of supply connecting Assam with the port of Calcutta. If it were severed, Stilwell's forces would have to withdraw back up the Hukawng Valley, down which they had so



laboriously advanced, and the 'planes, which were flying the Hump from bases in Assam, would have to withdraw, thereby severing the only supply route to China. Japanese success in Manipur would also mean the destruction of the centre of the British line defending India, leaving the country open to the invaders. In the Japanese general's Order of the Day he told his troops that the success of "Operation U" "will have a profound effect on the course of the war and may even lead to its conclusion". He exhorted his troops therefore to use "every ounce of energy and talent to achieve our purpose".

The Intelligence officers of General Slim's Fourteenth Army learned of the Japanese plan and notified Mountbatten. It was then decided to withdraw the divisions at Tiddim and Tamu and prepare the plain of Imphal for a state of siege by evacuating all civilians and administrative troops. The Allied strategy was to draw the Japanese out on to the plains of Manipur, where the Allies could exploit to its fullest extent their advantage of superior mobility and air power, rather than fight them in the Burma mountains and jungles beyond.

While defence measures were being taken, 100,000 of Japan's best-trained troops hurled themselves into the attack. The force was divided into three flying columns. The first of these hurled its full force against Tiddim. It struck a week after Wingate had landed in Burma. In his order for the withdrawal from Tiddim General Slim had not counted on the rapidity of the Japanese advance. No sooner had the 2,000 mules and 4,000 vehicles of the British Division started northwards along the tortuous mountain road in the retreat to Kohima than the enemy struck. They tried their usual tactics of throwing up barricades across the road, ambushing the advancing troops, and infiltrating at night along the flank. By these methods they managed to slow down the withdrawal to Imphal.

As the first troops of the Tiddim garrison entered Imphal the fortress there sustained a sudden attack from the second Japanese column, which had swept through a mountain pass to plant the Imperial standard on Indian soil for the first time. Soon the garrison was surrounded and besieged by a force greatly outnumbering it. To the north, Kohima was in the same plight. The Japanese were within less than thirty miles of the vital Bengal-Assam railway. Had the Nipponese forces been content merely to neutralize Kohima, using their main force to strike Dimapur, they would have achieved their object and been able to sever the railroad. But they had been ordered to destroy Imphal first. They stuck to this plan, though it was to prove fatal. The total British force defending Kohima was a single regiment, which was now sustaining the full force of the division which the Japanese hurled against it. The fighting was desperate. Tokyo was triumphant. This time they would accomplish

what they had attempted in Arakan. The Japanese broadcast to terrified Indian listeners that the British forces had been annihilated and that they should prepare to receive their "liberators".

Dispatches from the beleaguered garrisons were read to Mountbatten by Major-General Wildman-Lushington as he lay temporarily blinded in the 22nd American General Hospital at Ledo. A week before, while driving a jeep down a rough track, cut between bamboo thickets, a broken bamboo stalk snapped up and a sliver pierced his left eye-ball. Mountbatten was taken protestingly to the hospital and told that he must remain there for three weeks with his eyes bandaged if he ever wished to see again. Now, the news from Manipur was making him increasingly desperate and impatient with his disability. It would take a month to six weeks to get sufficient reinforcements to Manipur by rail to relieve Kohima or Imphal, and it was doubtful from the reports he had received whether either garrison could hold out that long. "I would rather lose my eye than Kohima," he complained vehemently to Major Scheie, the American doctor who was attending him. Finally, after a week in the hospital he persuaded Scheie to unbandage his eyes. He flew immediately to Fourteenth Army Headquarters, where he conferred with Slim and the Commander of the Third Tactical Air Force, Air Marshal Sir John Baldwin. Reserves must be sent to relieve Manipur as soon as possible. The only troops then available were the 5th and 7th Divisions, which had distinguished themselves so recently in the battle of the Arakan. Slim had, of course, already asked Baldwin to move them by air up to Manipur, but there was no transport aircraft available throughout the theatre for the purpose. Mountbatten solved the problem by taking immediate action. Although he had not the authority to do so, and did not believe there was time to gain the necessary authority from the Combined Chiefs of Staff, he ordered the necessary transport planes from the Hump route to fly the 5th and 7th Divisions to the area of combat. Mountbatten argued that if the Japanese thrust succeeded there would be no more Hump traffic in any case.

This decision was made just in time, as the situation throughout Manipur had grown increasingly critical. The divisions from Tiddim and Tamu had managed to get through to Imphal, but, even with reinforcement, the garrison was sustaining an almost overwhelming assault. From the hills overlooking the garrison enemy artillery was lobbing barrage after barrage down on the broken British defences. The force of this continuous bombardment was enough to turn the whole area from a verdant plain into a mass of mud, shell-holes, and tree-stumps. In spite of this, the garrison did not show any signs of weakening. Too late, the over-confident Japanese Fifteenth Army Commander hurled his crack 33rd Division against the stronghold. In his Order of the Day he

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proclaimed: "The fate of the Empire depends on the result of this battle. Imphal will be taken at all costs." Imphal was not taken. Reinforcements comprising units of the 5th and 7th Divisions had begun to arrive by air from the Arakan.

To the north the situation at Kohima was far more serious; for there a body of 3,500 soldiers was resisting a sustained and furious attack by 15,000 officers and men of the Japanese Imperial Army. Moreover, at Imphal there was an airstrip that could be used to fly out the wounded; there was none at Kohima. After almost twenty days of savage fighting, the ridge commanding Kohima was almost entirely in the hands of the enemy. But the defenders had disputed every inch of the way, causing heavy casualties among the attackers.

Then came the news that the 33rd Corps had arrived at Dimapur and was pushing east to relieve the garrison.

The Fourteenth Army was now able to turn from defence to the attack.

The Japanese siege of Kohima was lifted fifty days after it was begun by the heavy attack from Dimapur. After annihilating all Japanese resistance, the relief forces started to advance southward down the road to Imphal. At the same time the forces massed at Imphal broke through the now weakening Japanese cordon and started up the road to Kohima to meet the 33rd Corps, and thereby cut off any Japanese troops beyond the road. Another force moved out from Kohima and started eastward to cut off the Nipponese from their rear base at Ukrul, in the mountains between Kohima and the Chindwin.

Further northward, while the heroic battle of Imphal and Kohima was still raging, Stilwell and his Chinese-American forces were making steady progress towards Myitkyina, where they were to cover the construction of the Ledo road. Although the Japanese resistance had stiffened, air support aided Stilwell in maintaining a steady pace. The 10th U.S. Air Force, which was supporting the advance, found it effective to drop the daily rice supply to the Chinese about 1,000 yards ahead of their forward lines to ensure a daily advance, on the same principle as dangling a carrot in front of a donkey's nose.

With the aid of a specially trained American regiment, Merrill's Marauders, which strengthened his flank, Stilwell was able to reach the airfield at Myitkyina on May 17. The spirit of the Marauders was best exhibited in a letter which one of them wrote to his wife before the operation. He said:

"Darling, we're off soon. My pack is on my back, my gun is loaded and oiled and as I walk into the valley of the shadow of death I fear no son of a bitch."

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The capture of Myitkyina was important, as it would give the Allies an intermediate base between Assam and Kunming, which would considerably accelerate Hump operations—for 'planes would not have to carry so heavy a load of fuel, and could, therefore, take on a greater "payload".

The capture of Myitkyina itself did not take place for seventy-eight days after the town was surrounded and the airfield secured, much to the disappointment of both Mountbatten and Stilwell.

Shortly after the encirclement had been successfully completed some shots were fired at night by the Chinese forces on one side of the town. The Chinese on the other side did not realize that it was not the Japanese, and so returned the fire. In the morning, after a gun-battle lasting all night, there were many casualties, but they were Chinese rather than Japanese. In the confusion the Japanese had been able to strengthen their position in the town and get in some reinforcements.

This unfortunate incident was followed by a calamity. The American troops under General Merrill, who had so brilliantly supported the Chinese flank during the whole long advance, staged a mutiny. Recruited to a large extent from the South-West Pacific theatre, with the promise of leave after one action, they had been at the front for over two months under the worst conditions imaginable. High casualties, high disease-rates, and no definite promise of relief, had proved too much of a strain for their lowered morale. Stilwell had pushed them too hard in his single-minded determination to reach his objective.

Through the winter months, when India was faced with the threat of invasion, Mountbatten was worried not only with tactical problems but with strategic difficulties, for the latter was his main responsibility. After he had received the news that all his resources had been withdrawn, and while the battle of the "Admin. Box" was still in progress, he decided to revise the strategic plan for the theatre and to request a new directive from the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

Since the Quebec Conference he had become increasingly convinced that the reason his requests for greater numbers of landing-craft, ships, troops, 'planes, guns and ammunition had been repeatedly vetoed lay in the fundamental differences in strategic concept of the British and American Chiefs of Staff. Because of this divergence they were prepared to ignore the theatre rather than come to any definite conclusion. The British wanted to clear Burma, and subsequently Malaya and Singapore. They wanted this programme implemented by amphibious operations, in the planning for which Mountbatten was accepted as the greatest authority. The American strategic concept, on the other hand, was to create a large-scale diversion by supplying China, first by air and subsequently by the construction of a land route and an oil pipe-line, thereby keeping Chungking in the war and tying up several million Japanese

troops which might otherwise be redeployed against MacArthur's forces in the Pacific. Certainly the Americans gave overwhelming priority to the building of the Ledo road and to flying material through into China, and much lower priority to operations which might be undertaken for the reconquest of Burma and Malaya by way of amphibious assaults on Rangoon and elsewhere. This difference in strategy caused the Americans in South-East Asia to accuse the British of trying to direct the war solely towards the objective of regaining their lost possessions. On the other hand, the British would protest loudly that they were being kept bogged down in the north of Burma and that all their energy was being diverted to pushing through to China supplies of which the Chinese might not be able to make effective use before the end of the war.

Mountbatten sought to design a strategy which would reconcile both British and American points of view. He based his new plan on the thesis that the primary task of his theatre was to get as much petrol, ammunition and equipment as possible through to China, with a view to supplying the 14th Air Force so that it could operate against Japanese coastal shipping; and to build up bases in China from which the *B-29s*, then new, could operate against Japan.

He argued that it was evident that the Burma Road could not be extended to China in 1944, thanks to Chiang's refusal to let his Yunnan forces advance. Therefore he believed it best to try further to develop the air route over the Hump. But he also thought that, considering the Allied attack against Japan, his efforts in South-East Asia would be more effective, and that he would get a far higher theatre priority, if they were co-ordinated with the thrusts of MacArthur in the South-West Pacific and of Nimitz in the Central Pacific. Their joint end would best be served by penetrating as soon as possible within the periphery of Japan's defences, since her lines of communication were so over-extended that they were extremely vulnerable. Attacks against Malaya and Sumatra seemed best adapted to secure control of the Malacca Straits. After that it would be possible to sweep round and seize a port on the China Sea, probably Canton. If this were accomplished, one L.S.T. could deliver to China in one trip the same amount of supplies as could be delivered to her over the Burma Road in a month in the dry season with convoys working at maximum speed. Therefore the saving in time and material would be immense. Moreover, if Canton were in Allied hands, the Japanese would be forced to send many more troops into China, so that MacArthur would be relieved to some extent.

By this plan Mountbatten hoped he had been successful in reconciling the strategic concepts of the British and American Chiefs of Staff—the Americans liking it because it included greater aid to China, and the British because it called for a series of amphibious operations which would

cancel the North Burma strategy. His planners informed him that he already had sufficient land forces in the theatre to undertake this revised strategy, provided Stilwell's operations in North Burma were confined merely to holding what he had, instead of launching an attack. Shipping and land craft, however, would have to be provided for elsewhere. When he had drawn up the plan embodying these conclusions, he held a staff meeting early in January. He then cabled an outline of his project to the Chiefs of Staff, at the same time asking their permission to send a mission (with the code name "Axiom") to London and Washington, headed by his American Deputy Chief of Staff, the drastic General Wedemeyer.

General Stilwell, in his capacity as Deputy Chief of Staff, Commanding General of the Northern Combat Area, Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo, and Lend-Lease Administrator for the entire theatre, paid one of his rare visits to Delhi to attend the conference at which "Axiom" was decided on. When it was proposed to him that operations in his command area should be reduced to a minimum in the interests of the new plan he became excited. I have been told by a highly placed member of Mountbatten's Staff that his arguments against the plan were puerile. He considered the "Axiom" mission just another part of a British plot to prevent his leading a large force successfully in the field and completing his Burma Road. Therefore, without consulting his superior, Mountbatten, he decided to send a mission of his own to Washington to lobby against "Axiom". I have never been able to see exactly what moral justification Stilwell had for this action, which has few precedents or parallels in military history.

Wedemeyer arrived in London with his mission at the most difficult time he could have chosen. It was February 1944, and preparations for the forthcoming invasion of France were at their height. Arriving when it did, the delegation was considered no less than a nuisance by Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff. There were bigger things afoot. Nevertheless they received the plan "enthusiastically".

Wedemeyer arrived in Washington to run into a solid wall of disapproval, raised in a large measure by Stilwell's mission, which, of course, had arrived before Wedemeyer's. Stilwell's mission had spread the story that, although Wedemeyer as Mountbatten's chief planner was originally responsible for suggesting the revised strategy, it was none the less part of a British plot to regain Singapore at the expense of supplies to China. "Axiom" failed, with Mountbatten receiving a further directive to clear the whole of northern Burma and to push a pipe-line through to China. As he had pointed out, this would mean fighting the Japanese on their own ground, an elementary strategic error, and in the jungles, where the use of 'planes and tanks, in which the Allies then held an advantage, was precluded."

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The failure of "Axiom" automatically sentenced the soldiers fighting on the Burma front to yet another year of heat and hell, fever and frustration. But General Wedemeyer's trip to Washington was not a total failure, for he was able to transmit Mountbatten's urgent request for more transport aircraft—such as those supplied earlier for Wingate's operation—to General H. H. Arnold, Chief of the U.S.A.A.F.

Arnold promised four combat-cargo groups, each of 100 C-47s, and four more air commandos, but only on the condition that Mountbatten proved that he had real need for them. Mountbatten substantiated the need for two of the combat-cargo groups, but, while he was preparing plans to prove a need for the other two, General Kenny, MacArthur's Air Commander, heard of them and persuaded MacArthur to put in a demand to have them allotted to the South-West Pacific. Arnold provisionally agreed to Kenny's plan, but on receiving Mountbatten's, together with a firm protest, he divided the remaining two between the two commanders.

More transport aircraft were supplied by the British, but when all those in the theatre were added together it was found there were only about half the number needed to supply the armies in Burma, who had no proper surface lines of communication. On Mountbatten's Air Chief's, General Stratesmeyer's, recommendation, Mountbatten took the tremendous risk of ordering his transport aircraft to fly at double the normal sustained rates. The British flew about 100 to 296 hours a month, the Americans from 100 to 204. Maintenance crews worked night and day. Some day the history of air supply will prove to be not only a great epic but also a lesson in a completely novel technique of campaigning. It was air supply that had made the victories in the Arakan and in Manipur possible, and it was air supply which was eventually going to enable the Allies to drive the Japs out of Burma.

Following the repulse of the Japanese attack in Manipur and the beginning of the monsoon, Mountbatten moved the headquarters of his command from the stultifying atmosphere of New Delhi to the gardens of Peredynia, near the town of Kandy, high in the mountains of Ceylon. It was never his intention to remain in New Delhi any longer than it took to get the Command fully organized, for he did not want to become involved in the intrigue, jealousy and lethargy which then characterized the British-India command. Moreover, he wanted to establish his own headquarters as an independent and going concern. His choice of location caused much criticism at the time although it was in many ways perfect for a headquarters. It was not under the control of the India Command, the climate was healthy, or at least healthier than any place in India (and this was an important consideration when it is remembered that a large part of the staff was composed of female personnel), and it was nearer to

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Rangoon and Singapore, to which the Command was eventually expected to move.

The botanical gardens at Peredynia are filled with gigantic trees from every tropical region of the world, which cast their shadows over beds of exotic flowers. In view of the magnificent surroundings, it was possible to lay out a headquarters of an unusual nature. Instead of rows of numbered nissen huts, temporary buildings were erected and grouped around various garden parks and circles.

Suitable names were given to the roads. For instance, to get to the Public Relations Department one turned into the garden and walked down "Fleet Street", which was lined with the editorial offices of *S.E.A.C.* the troops' newspaper. Eventually you would come to "Ludgate Circus", around which were grouped the Public Relations, Censorship and Civil Affairs Sections. The American sections of headquarters, such as the Adjutant-General's Office, Finance Office, and so forth, were situated on "Broadway", which led on to "Times Square". It is surprising how much more interesting it is for people to work in such a place and how much easier for the visitor to find his way about.

In the centre of the camp was the Supreme Commander's building, containing his office and conference rooms. In front of it four gigantic flag-poles flew the flags of the Allies, and, on top of the building, metal supports carried the antennae of the radio transmitters.

Stretched out from the headquarters were the various camps in which the troops were housed. These were laid out, for the most part, along the banks of a river, and their rush-roofed bushes with their verandahs suggested coolness and comfort. Attractive spots along the bank of the river had been chosen for messes and clubs. At night these provided ideal places to dine.

Mountbatten himself, and the members of his personal staff, lived in the King's Pavilion, which had been built as a royal residence for Queen Victoria in case she should ever come to Ceylon, but had later been used by the Governor as his summer retreat. The small white classical palace, with its large and commodious rooms, its punkas, and its terraces, is inconceivably beautiful in its setting of green lawns, magnificent trees, and brilliant flower-beds. Mountbatten's detractors have said that this palace suggested a royal court rather than a military headquarters.

Kandy had, in actual fact, one great drawback, and that was its remoteness. To get there, either from the port of Trincomalee or Colombo, one had to go either by slow train or by car, winding up narrow and dangerous roads. By either way the journey took at least two hours. As it was in the mountains, it was also impossible to find a good place for an adjacent landing-field. To go from the Burma front to the island of Ceylon by plane takes between eight and nine hours, so a good deal of time was



wasted going back and forth. However, it was certainly no further from the front than New Delhi.

During the short time he was in Kandy, Mountbatten arranged to see personally all the individuals composing his staff. He knew that, as he said, "It would be disappointing to have worked at someone's headquarters for six months and have to say afterwards, when somebody asked you what your boss was like, that you had never met him."

As in the case of the organization of his famous farewell party at Malta, he planned his meeting with them scientifically. Instead of holding luncheon parties in the pompous dining-room of the Pavilion, he usually had lunch at a round table, seating nine, on the terrace. Every day, when at his headquarters, he invited four or five officers to lunch, American as well as British. He also included two or three of "my stooges", his A.D.C.s or secretaries. The officers of his headquarters, whom he invited in rotation, were divided into two categories. Those in the first were invited by order of seniority and rank, from generals downwards, and those in the other by order of length of service at headquarters. There would be two of each kind. As the headquarters offices lay a quarter of an hour's drive from the King's Pavilion, Mountbatten had the officers with whom he was going to lunch introduced to him at headquarters, whence he would take two of them back with him to the King's Pavilion in his own car so he would have a chance to talk to them. When they arrived at the Pavilion, rum cocktails were served and there was more general conversation. At lunch, the two officers who had not driven in the car with him sat on his left and right. The two who had driven up with him before also drove back with him after lunch.

Mountbatten was often heard to remark that a small circular table is much better than a large one, for proximity encourages general conversation, but opinion seems to have had it that Mountbatten "held the table" himself during most of the meals. He seems to have had an unending supply of anecdotes with which to entertain his guests. These stories and reminiscences were almost always occasioned by some statement made by a guest in response to a personal question put by Mountbatten. It was seldom, indeed, that the military unit to which a guest belonged, the places in which he had served, or even his personal life, did not recall to Mountbatten some interesting or amusing bit of information often previously unknown to the officer himself. With this ability to converse on topics which interested each individual, he was usually able to strike a responsive chord in every one of his guests and always left them with the impression that he was personally interested not only in them but also in what they were doing. This talent was a potent morale-builder. Every officer at headquarters felt that neither he nor his work was passing unnoticed by his superiors.

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These lunch-parties took place regularly six days a week when Mountbatten was in Kandy, but dinner-parties were rare. Mountbatten dined either with two or three senior members of his Staff and talked about the problems of the Command, or else *en famille* with the staff in general so he could get back to work at the earliest possible moment. When they did take place, dinner-parties were always given on an evening when a film was being shown, presumably because it was easier and less exhausting after a heavy day's work to show his guests a film than to make conversation for another two hours. It also gave Mountbatten an excuse to see the films himself, for he still retained his almost childlike enthusiasm for them.

A projector had been installed at the King's Pavilion and on two evenings a week a fairly recent film was shown. A film was always advertised a day in advance on a board at the entrance to the main living-quarters in the town, and anybody who liked could go up to the Pavilion, officers and enlisted personnel alike. Sometimes, if anything went wrong with the projector, the audience would be surprised to see Mountbatten leap to his feet and go into the box where it was housed. His expert advice as to how to set it right was always effective.

On week-ends Mountbatten would occasionally have a "rest" in a little bungalow, containing four bedrooms and a spring gramophone, some two hours' drive from Kandy in the mountains near Dimbula. The bungalow was fitted with an elaborate communications system to headquarters so that he could keep in touch with what was going on while enjoying the bracing air and the magnificent view. Those who were fortunate enough to be invited up for a quiet week-end were surprised to discover that as much business was transacted there as at headquarters. The secretephone literally never stopped ringing and Mountbatten worked until two or three o'clock every morning.

He always drove his own jeep up the steep road to Dimbula, with its hairpin turns, and would usually manage to shave forty-five minutes off the two hours it usually takes to drive from Kandy. On these occasions he went back and forth in what he considered mufti—that is, a naval blazer, flannel trousers, and an open shirt. In this costume he considered himself quite unrecognizable. Frequently he picked up Service personnel by the way and gave them a lift, convinced they would not be able to penetrate his disguise. This seemed so unlikely his friends used to tease him about it, but occasionally it actually happened and he would boast about it with delight.

In his Kandy headquarters there was none of that spiritless inactivity which might have been expected in such a beautiful and remote spot. In fact, life in Kandy was extremely strenuous, for Mountbatten was planning operations to cover that dry season which heralds the autumn.

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Although he completed several alternate plans, the one he favoured most was "Operation Dracula". It envisaged the capture of Rangoon by a combined seaborne and airborne assault, with the object of cutting the main Japanese line of supply. If the Nipponese opposed the landing, Stilwell's forces would be able to advance against reduced effectives. If they did not, airborne and seaborne forces would be able to advance northward, engaging the enemy as they met them. Stilwell, feeling possibly much as he had felt about "Axiom", did not approve of the amphibious "Operation Dracula", and so forwarded his own plan to the Combined Chiefs. In this plan he proposed that the Fourteenth Army, under General Slim, advance towards Mandalay, while his own troops, profiting by the diversion, captured Bhamo and Lashio. These two cities were the key-points of Japanese resistance to the north.

Mountbatten decided the most effective way to present his plans would be to go to London in August and lay them before the Prime Minister and the British Chiefs of Staff in person before they went to the next scheduled combined Chiefs of Staff conference. While he was away Stilwell would have to act as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander. There was some question among the Americans and British at Kandy whether the American General would face this responsibility and come to headquarters. It was widely known he would go to almost any length to avoid being at headquarters in any capacity whatsoever. This can only be attributed to Stilwell's knowledge of his own strength and weaknesses. While he was an excellent Field Commander, he was not an administrator. But this time, to everybody's surprise, he did not shirk his duty and came to Kandy willingly.

The best account of Stilwell's short tenure as acting Supreme Allied Commander is to be found in Frank Eldridge's book, *Wrath in Burma*. Eldridge tells how Stilwell arrived in Kandy and established himself in the O.S.S. bungalow, how he refused to use Mountbatten's office, how he utilized Mountbatten's black Cadillac for his cook to do the marketing in, while he himself drove round in a jeep; how he used to spend the afternoons playing the accordion on the verandah of the O.S.S. bungalow while listening to his aides crack jokes and watching them wrestle. Eldridge also tells how Stilwell "presided" over one of the daily Supreme Allied Commander meetings. A "normal session" lasted more than two hours. Stilwell wound this one up in twenty minutes, and cancelled all further meetings.

Eldridge infers that using a Supreme Allied Commander's Cadillac to pick up the groceries was a clever implied rebuke by a simple self-respecting American on the chromium pretentiousness of the British Commander. He also infers that Stilwell disposed of an onerous and unnecessary formality when he cancelled the Supreme Allied Com-

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mander's daily meeting. He does not infer that Stilwell cancelled the Supreme Allied Commander's meetings because he had no knowledge of the theatre problems under discussion and was afraid of making a fool of himself. Nor does Eldridge state that at the one meeting Stilwell held he had to be prompted by the British Assistant Chief of Staff on how to deal with every question that arose.

When Mountbatten was in London Churchill asked him whether he could spare the modern part of the Eastern Fleet for deployment against Japan in the Pacific. He was told that if he wished to retain it he was at liberty to do so. But Mountbatten said he thought the fleet would be better employed in the Pacific and asked to retain only a few old battle-ships for bombardment, auxiliary carriers for air support, and his amphibious fleet. It was common knowledge in Whitehall that Churchill was determined the British should take a part in the invasion of Japan, just as it was common knowledge that Admiral King was doing everything possible to prevent the final invasion being less than an all-United-States-Navy show.

Mountbatten returned to Kandy at the end of the month and Stilwell shortly afterwards returned to his Command in the north.

Mountbatten arrived at his headquarters resolved on making some drastic changes in his Command. He had been Supreme Allied Commander almost a year, and if it had been a bad year at the front, it had also been a bad year at headquarters. In fact, Mountbatten's position had been made almost intolerable by the fact that his three Commanders-in-Chief did not fully understand the concept of a Supreme Allied Commander, nor his co-ordinating function. The personalities of the three Service Commanders were at variance, so Mountbatten decided that they should be replaced that summer, before the next dry season. Consequently in November there was a great reshuffle in higher appointments.

Not long after Mountbatten first arrived in the theatre it became evident that he and Giffard, as his Commander-in-Chief of the theatre Land Forces, would not work together. Officers close to Mountbatten depreciated Giffard's main contribution, which had been the training of troops for the campaign: an achievement, by the way, for which he has never been given credit by anybody except General Slim. His long period of service in Africa had given him great insight into training in discipline, but he was accused of being cautious, and it was said of him that he was one of those men who could face everything fearlessly except change. Caution is not a characteristic that Mountbatten admires, particularly when it is opposed to his own ideas. In the early days he and the part of the staff he brought with him had no realization of the multiplicity of the problems of the Burma campaign from a military point of view. Thus early he was led to believe that Giffard was making difficulties when he

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was merely stating them. Rumour has it that Mountbatten finally lost confidence in Giffard because he insisted that there was time enough to bring in reinforcements to release Kohima by train, while Mountbatten felt it necessary to bring them in by air. The hardest part of it was that Giffard had to stay on for months after Mountbatten had told him of his lost confidence because there was nobody to take his place. Finally there was a reshuffling of Commands in Europe and General Sir Oliver Leese was sent out from Italy to relieve Giffard as Commander-in-Chief.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse was relieved of his command at the same time. Although he was one of those men who have had a brilliant record on paper, and always passed every staff course with an easy first, he proved less successful in the actual operation of an air force. He was one of those men who think only in terms of the defensive, and these, as has been said, were not Mountbatten's terms.

The most difficult of the three Commanders-in-Chief to work with was in Mountbatten's own Service, Admiral Sir James Somerville. He had been in command of the East Indies Fleet ever since the days when the Japanese had sunk the *Renown* and the *Prince of Wales*. As an admiral with an almost non-existent force he had done a magnificent job. At the end of 1943, when it looked as if at last he was going to be given some scope for offensive action, he was placed under a man who had commanded a destroyer when he, Somerville, had been in command of a fleet. The position was equally difficult and embarrassing for both Somerville and Mountbatten.

Stilwell also was to go. When the Generalissimo had agreed to keep Stilwell on at Mountbatten's and General Somervell's request he had only agreed to do so for a year. The year was up and the Generalissimo had made it clear to Washington that Stilwell was no longer *persona grata*. He had, among other things, persisted in referring to Chiang as "the Peanut". He was appropriately promoted to full General and recalled to Washington. General Wedemeyer, Mountbatten's sharp American Deputy Chief of Staff, was given the post of Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo, while General "Dan" Sultan, Stilwell's old friend and second-in-command, took over command of the Chinese-American troops fighting in northern Burma.

By the time this reshuffling of appointments had taken place Mountbatten had received the directive for which he had been waiting from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. It instructed him to implement "Operation Dracula", which called for airborne and seaborne assaults on Rangoon, and also another plan which called for an offensive by the Chinese-American forces simultaneous to the crossing of the Chindwin from Imphal by the Fourteenth Army. This double offensive would enable the Allies to hurl the Japanese out of northern Burma, while the-

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capture of Rangoon would seal off their supply route and avenue of escape.

For the first time it looked as if nothing could interfere with the rapid destruction of Japanese resistance in Burma. Soon the Chinese and American forces would be advancing over the paddy fields of central Burma rather than fighting a hidden foe in the shadows of the jungle. Soon the tired troops of the Fourteenth Army would be fighting the remnants of the Japanese forces on broad plains laced with mighty rivers instead of ferreting them out in deep ravines and on high mountain peaks.

Suddenly, with the inevitable recurrence of a tropical rain, events took a turn for the worse. Once again the Japanese had a plan of their own—this time in China.

In five months the Japanese had advanced more than 300 miles, while forces of Chiang had been pushed back beyond Liuchow. The *B-29* bases, and those of the 14th Air Force, that had been built in central and south-east China, despite unbelievable difficulties and at fantastic expense, fell one after another, undefended, while division after division of Chiang's army melted like wax before the heat of the attack.

General Claire Chennault, leading the 14th American Air Force, was unable to use the air power at his disposal to halt the headlong advance of the Japanese because the Japanese forces always advanced in deployed formation at night, which made them tactically impervious to air attack. It is surprising that Chennault had not learned enough through his long experience with Japanese tactics to realize that this was so. As the whole strategy of the Allies in China had been built around Chennault's assertion that, if he were given sufficient air power, he could defend the airfields, no active precaution against a mass Japanese advance had been taken other than to give Chennault what he asked for. The danger was so acute that it looked as if the entire Chinese war machine might disintegrate and Chungking fall to the advancing forces of Japan.

The high-ranking American officers in the Kuomintang capital were adding to the confusion by bickering amongst themselves. The place was seething with spite, jealousies, hate and pettiness of all sorts.

Wedemeyer arrived in Chungking from Kandy to find the situation there critical. The Japanese had advanced so far that both Chungking, the capital, and Kunming, the vital Hump terminal, were threatened. If either place were to fall it was likely that China would be out of the war, and that most of the 4,000,000 Japanese troops deployed in China could be withdrawn and redeployed against MacArthur. This must be prevented at all costs.

Wedemeyer held a meeting of all the high-ranking Chinese generals to decide what measures were to be taken. He finally persuaded them

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to adopt a plan under which two of the five American-trained Chinese divisions fighting in Burma were to be withdrawn for service in China as well as three combat cargo squadrons, two troop-carrier squadrons, and a few heavy bombers, but he was only prepared to ask for these if the Chinese on their side were willing to strengthen the flanks of this force by flying in some of the troops fighting the Communists in the north. Wedemeyer sold the Chinese his idea by appealing to their fondness for deception and cunning. He told them that information must reach the Japanese that all five of the American-trained Chinese divisions were to be flown in to strengthen the Chinese forces.

Wedemeyer's request for the two divisions and the 'planes was received with no little surprise at Kandy, where the misconception had been current that Wedemeyer, when he took up his new command in Chungking, should really work in the theatre interests of his former commander, Mountbatten. It was also felt that Wedemeyer had been rather "caddish" in using his knowledge of the forces at Mountbatten's disposal to ask for the withdrawal of some of them. In truth Wedemeyer had worked in the interests of his former commander by not requesting the withdrawal of all five divisions, an act for which General Carton de Wiart, the Prime Minister's special representative in China, had criticized him because, he said, the risk was too closely calculated; and for which the Chinese had criticized him because, they said, when the country is in danger all her troops should be called upon to fight for her and not for the British in some remote jungle. In any case, Mountbatten promptly complied with the request, hoping by this compliance to forestall any further demands from Wedemeyer.

Here, then, was another disappointment. Mountbatten called his planners together to tell them it would be necessary to revise their plans because there were not enough aircraft left in the theatre to supply the advance of the Fourteenth Army in central Burma. It was easy enough for him to imagine how the men of the Fourteenth Army would feel being unable to advance and come to grips with the Japanese after having beaten them so brilliantly in Manipur. But one disappointment was not enough. He received an urgent radio message from Churchill suggesting that they should meet in Cairo, where Churchill was stopping on his way to Russia. After a certain amount of confusion and delay they finally met and Churchill explained that Von Rundstedt was putting up stiffer resistance than was expected and that the war was going to last longer than the Chiefs of Staff had believed. The reason why Churchill had asked him to come to Cairo was so that he could break the bad news to Mountbatten personally that it was unlikely he would get the necessary amphibious resources to implement a combined operation against Rangoon for some time to come.

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"Operation Dracula" was now nothing but an empty shell. Here, then, was yet another disappointment; and yet another operation to be shelved; and one more substitute to be effected whereby the best use could be made of the landing-craft then in the theatre. Mountbatten decided that all he could do in the way of an offensive was to clear the Arakan by a combined operation. The area of the Arakan was becoming of increasing importance, due to the need of the Allies for control of some territory in Burma on which to build air bases from which to supply the advancing Allied forces in central Burma. As it was, the troops spear-heading the attack hurled southward from Kohima were beginning to get beyond the 250-mile range of the 'planes based in Assam.

During the preparation of the combined operation in the Arakan a typical example was presented of the almost superstitious way in which the average officer in Burma regarded the Japanese. A professor who was examining air reconnaissance photographs was asked by the Intelligence Division of the 15th Corps what he believed were the dispositions of the Japanese forces in the Akyab area.

"There are none," he said.

"What leads you to believe that?" was the rejoinder.

"Well, these pictures show that there is grass growing in the streets."

"Oh, you who have been fighting the war in Europe don't seem to realize how clever the Japanese are at camouflage. They plant that grass to make us think the streets are deserted."

"Well, how do you explain that all the gun mountings have had their guns removed?" asked the professor.

"You see those deserted-looking sheds along the coast? Well, that's where the guns are concealed. The moment our ships come into view those sheds will fall away and disclose great six-inch guns!"

Needless to say, nothing so magical happened. In fact, the Japanese did not fire a shot and the Combined Operation forces landed unchallenged, as the town was indeed completely deserted. The resistance met elsewhere in the Arakan was not sufficiently stiff to repulse the Allied armies. In a little over two months of hard fighting the Arakan, over which there had been such bitter and bloody dispute, was at last in Allied hands.

To the north, in central Burma, the Fourteenth Army slogged ahead steadily several miles a day, slowly overcoming an enemy who had little left except a fanatical will to fight, for the whole Japanese system of supply was fast breaking down.

At the end of January, when news was steadily pouring into headquarters of victories on all sectors of the front, General Sultan announced that his forces had linked with the Chinese army pushing down from Yunnan. Land communications with China were now securely re-



established, and that military White Elephant and political symbol of appeasing Chungking, the Burma Road, was now completed. Here ended one of the great follies of the war. From its beginning the story of the Stilwell Road, as Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, named it, was fantastic. An American Corps of Engineers, at the cost of a million dollars a mile, had blasted, hacked, and torn a road up and down ranges of mountains 15,000 feet high through jungles that are the thickest in the world. This ribbon of rough road, which slowly rolled out in the path of Stilwell and his Chinese battalions, was to him a Crusader's badge. It was a material symbol of his progress against the Japanese, a progress more sure and measurable than the counted dead of the enemy. This road, slowly snaking forward through the territory from which Stilwell and his tattered army had fled two years before, was Stilwell's answer to the Japanese.

The real purpose of the road as far as Myitkyina, as conceived by that brilliant engineering officer General Raymond Wheeler, was to serve as a line of supply for Stilwell and his advancing forces, but it was not a military advantage to carry it further. Whether the fact of its being in process of building helped persuade the Kuomintang to remain in the war on the side of the Allies it is hard to say, but one thing is certain: after the road's completion the only traffic that ever went over it was a few hurrah parties. Now the jungle is fast reclaiming it, and rivers have washed parts of it away, and Stilwell, the man who fought so stubbornly for it, is dead.

The combined Chiefs of Staff, on the basis of news of the completion of the Stilwell Road and of the successes all along the front, issued Mountbatten a further directive in which he was told first to liberate Burma, then Malaya, and after that to open the Malacca Straits, thereby clearing the way to supply an operation against the China coast. All this, he was told, must be done with the forces then at his disposal. That was all.

Enthusiastically, Mountbatten set about examining the plans for this operation. Here, at last, was the chance to stage a combined operation that he had been waiting for. The only possible plan seemed to be to seize the small and almost uncharted Phuket Island off the Kra Isthmus as the forward base from which to move in a concentrated assault on Singapore. While Mountbatten was formulating these plans more good news flowed in from all parts of the front. The Fourteenth Army had now crossed the Irrawaddy, which bisects Burma, and was poised to destroy whatever resistance the Japanese could muster throughout central Burma. Simultaneously, another force was moving undetected through the malaria jungles further south to split the Japanese armies by seizing by surprise the communications centre and supply base at Meiktila.

But again, as all was looking well, characteristically enough, Mount-

batten began to receive intimations of more trouble in China. This time it was the threat of famine, and the Generalissimo decided the only way to get the necessary food to meet it was to reconquer large areas of paddy fields. For this purpose General Wedemeyer radioed Mountbatten to send to China the American Mars Brigade, which had relieved Merrill's Marauders, the three Chinese divisions still fighting in north Burma, and all American transport aircraft in the theatre. Compliance with this request would have wrecked the offensive he had planned, so he flew to Calcutta to confer with Wedemeyer, then on his way to Washington, with the further intention of going on to Chungking to talk to the Generalissimo. He managed to reach an understanding with Wedemeyer and, later, with the Generalissimo. His arrival in the Chinese capital was impressive. He received the double honour of being met at the airport by T. V. Soong and on the steps of the house he was staying in by the Generalissimo himself. Several days later, having managed to evade the release of any further transport aircraft until Rangoon was in Allied hands, and having been given China's highest military decoration, the Order of the Cloud and Banner (first class), he left for Kandy.

There were no further incidents to counteract the even flow of good news, but by the end of March he became obsessed by yet a new dread. This was that the Allied Forces in central Burma would not be able to reach Rangoon before the beginning of the monsoon, and this would spell disaster. The monsoon, if it did not halt the advance, would most certainly slow it up. Troops, trucks, tanks, and artillery would all become bogged down and water-logged in the five months of almost continuous downpour. This would cause further delays in bringing the campaign to an end and as many as 7,000 more lives might have to be sacrificed. At all costs Rangoon must be reached in time and the Japanese forces split. But with the sort of bad luck that caused the splinter of bamboo to be embedded in Mountbatten's eye at the crucial time of the Kohima operation, he was again laid up at a vital moment in the campaign, this time by amoebic dysentery.

A doctor was called to the King's Pavilion, who instructed Mountbatten, "Stay in bed for five weeks and takes doses of this medicine every two hours." Mountbatten ordered that nobody was to be told he was ill, for he considered news about the physical incapacity of a commander was bad for troops' morale.

The first day he was bedridden a great deal of telephoning went on. The A.D.C.s were asking whether they should permit one visitor or another to see Mountbatten. The next day Mountbatten started working again, although the doctor had ordered him to take a complete rest. After a little while he began to drive himself so hard that one of his

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personal staff asked the doctor to give him some drug that would force him to rest.

The doctor replied: "Well, don't worry. I am giving him a drug today that will make him incapable of working." The medicine so affected Mountbatten's energies that the next night he worked until three o'clock in the morning.

Three weeks after contracting the disease he decided to go up to Dimbula for a short rest. No sooner had he arrived there than a secretephone from headquarters began ringing, but, owing to some mechanical failure, the message could not be transmitted, and therefore he reluctantly decided to make the best of things and go to bed at nine. At two, the important message came through and proved to be of a highly controversial nature. Mountbatten was awakened and spent the rest of the night drafting messages and giving orders over the secretephone.

He did not permit himself to succumb to the natural lassitude engendered by dysentery, for it was the most critical moment in the campaign. The Arakan offensive had not stopped with the capture of Akyab but had continued with further attacks down the Arakan coast, getting ever nearer Rangoon. The seizure of Myebon, Ramree Island, Kangaw, Ru-ywa and Letpan followed in quick succession. At the same time there was a great deal of activity on the northern sector of the front. General Slim suddenly launched a powerful drive against Mandalay, key city in central Burma. Despite a powerful show of resistance, the Japanese were unable to hold it. Finally, on March 20, Mandalay fell. After announcing this great victory in the House of Commons, Churchill added fervently, "Thank God they've got to a place whose name I can pronounce." At the same time as Slim was staging the great drive on Mandalay, a great concentration of tanks was moving undetected through the jungle towards Meiktila, 100 miles to the south-west, far behind the enemy lines. This city was the main supply base and communications centre of the Japanese forces fighting the Allies in the north. The blow was unexpected, the fighting fierce, yet within seventy-two hours Meiktila airfield was in Allied hands and more than 3,500 of the Japanese defenders killed. Scarcely had the airfield been secured than a whole brigade of reinforcements was flown in to strengthen the assault on the town itself. Shortly thereafter Meiktila fell to the Allies, and with its capture came the end of organized resistance in central Burma. Although by this brilliant double thrust enemy opposition was shattered over a vast area, there were still 300 miles of enemy territory between the forward lines of the Allies and the port of Rangoon, and only six weeks before the monsoon rains would disrupt communications.

Mountbatten decided that the only way to ensure the seizure of Rangoon was to stage a sea and airborne attack on the port with all the

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resources available in the theatre. He had planned to use his amphibious fleet to secure island bases off the coast of Malaya, preparatory to the invasion of the mainland planned for September, but he decided it would be better to risk the Malayan landing than the taking of Rangoon. Therefore, on May 1, airborne troops were dropped to secure the shore defences of Rangoon and on the following day landing-craft disgorged the first wave of shock troops. No sooner had the first soldier put his foot ashore than the torrential monsoon rains started pouring down—ten days ahead of schedule.

The assault troops arrived to find the city completely deserted, for the Japanese, after having been given strict orders to defend Rangoon to the death, had evacuated it to the last man. The key to Burma was now in Allied hands. Some twelve days later the 15th Corps linked up with the Fourteenth Army, who were nearing exhaustion at Pegu after a 1,000-mile advance through jungle and swamp from the frontiers of India.

Burma, however, was virtually cleared. What Japanese troops were left were trying to escape by disguising themselves as natives or fighting with the courage of despair in surrounded pockets of resistance. Such was the confusion that on VJ-Day the Japanese Commander-in-Chief, Burma, radioed Mountbatten: "I beg to inform Your Excellency that I have passed order to cease fire to all Japanese forces with which I am in contact. If Your Excellency will indicate to me the position of units of which I have lost track I will pass the order to them." Finally Burma was in Allied hands.

The conquest of Burma had indeed been a miracle. The men of Mountbatten's command had not only defeated the Japanese, but also the jungle, the disease incubus, the monsoon and the fear in their own hearts. The Allied divisions of British and Americans, Indians and Chinese that had been driven out of Burma were defeated for two years on land, sea, and in the air. But they came back and, fighting over the most terrible terrain in the world, managed to account for 190,000 of the enemy, a greater number than had been killed in either China or the Pacific.

But the greatest and most difficult operation of the campaign still lay ahead: the invasion of Malaya. Mountbatten had hoped that he would be given almost unlimited resources for this undertaking, for almost simultaneous with the fall of Burma had come the surrender of Germany. The hopes of reinforcements which this raised in Mountbatten's mind were soon dashed by another characteristic message from the Chiefs of Staff, telling him he would be expected to add almost the entire weight of his bombers to those based in the Pacific, for the purpose of pulverizing the home island of Japan.

The task of invading Malaya precluded the pause for celebration

that usually marks the end of a successful and difficult campaign. No sooner had the harbour of Rangoon become open for shipping than it became the centre of feverish activity. The invasion of Malaya was scheduled less than four months ahead. Mountbatten had planned two landings, one at Port Dickson and the other at Port Swettenham, about 200 miles up the Malayan coast from Singapore. Beach-heads would be established and then the invasion force would march south on Singapore. This plan was known by its code name as "Operation Zipper" and was to be the largest all-British amphibious action of the war.

In June, as 'planes, landing-craft, carriers and tanks were concentrating for the invasion, Mountbatten flew to Manila to visit MacArthur and discuss with him the future co-ordination of the war against Japan.

On his arrival the air was warm with praise. On the first night he was there the two Supreme Commanders dined together. During the course of the evening MacArthur paid his guest the following sententious tribute. He said: "I do not want to offend your modesty, but there is no other person in the world today so qualified as I am to judge the difficulties of a theatre command without priorities. I have had a terrible time, but, as your priorities were lower than mine, I know you have had a worse time." And he concluded, "Only when history comes to be written will they realize what you have done, which I alone am in a position to know now."

When Mountbatten left for Kandy three days later he had agreed, subject to the Big Three Conference shortly to be held at Potsdam, to take over the responsibility for MacArthur's by-passed areas so that the American Supreme Commander would be free to concentrate his entire resources on the invasion of Japan. These areas included the Netherlands East Indies, Borneo, French Indo-China and Portuguese Timor.

Mountbatten only stopped overnight in Kandy, for he had decided to proceed to London to discuss with the Chiefs of Staff the need for added reinforcements if his theatre were to be enlarged. It had been his original intention to stop for a night in Paris in order to pay his respects to General de Gaulle. When Churchill was told that Mountbatten was on his way to Paris, he sent a "Most Immediate" (which reached him in Cairo) to proceed to Potsdam instead.

So direct to Potsdam Mountbatten went. He was no doubt somewhat exhausted upon arrival, as he had spent his whole time in the 'plane busily at work drafting dispatches and reviewing plans. The first evening spent in Frederick the Great's pompous capital he was invited to dine privately with Churchill. No sooner had he entered Churchill's room than the Prime Minister began to behave as though he were suffering from a fear complex. He closed the door, after looking carefully to see

that nobody was standing in the corridors, then he secured the transom, examined the window, and said to Mountbatten in a low voice, "You are going to have to revise your plans."

Mountbatten was aghast. He had visions of even deeper cuts in his allocations, but Churchill was quick to dispel them.

"The war with Japan will be over in less than a month," said Churchill. After a dramatic pause he continued: "We propose to use a newly developed atomic bomb against the Islands of Japan which will cause the Emperor to capitulate immediately. Don't mention this to a soul."

The next morning Mountbatten attended a meeting of the British Chiefs of Staff. After a few minutes they began to look about surreptitiously, and after they had ascertained that they could not be overheard Mountbatten was told "not to breath it to a soul, but . . ."

That day Mountbatten had lunch with President Truman. After the already twice-repeated precautions had been taken once more, Truman leaned forward confidentially. "Don't repeat it to a soul, but . . ."

The following day Mountbatten was to pay a call on Stalin. This meant entering the Russian sector of Berlin. The streets here presented a strange contrast to those in the rest of the bombed capital. All was silence and they were deserted except for a guard holding a rifle in readiness, with his finger on the trigger, on either side of the road every fifty yards. Up and down the blasted streets they drove slowly, crossing and re-crossing their own path. After they had been doing this for some time Mountbatten began to suspect that they were nearing Stalin's headquarters, for now there were guards on both sides of the road and each of these was armed with a tommy-gun instead of a rifle. Finally the car stopped outside Stalin's house, which, Mountbatten noticed, was curiously free of guards. A few moments later he was shown into a room in which sat Stalin and Pavlov, his special interpreter.

Mountbatten found Stalin looking very much like the caricatures of him. He was broad and heavy-set, and both his heavy moustache and his hair were shot with grey. He was dressed in a somewhat theatrical white doeskin tunic, unadorned with decorations except for a hammer and sickle encircled by a wreath embroidered in red on either shoulder. His trousers were dark blue, with two bright stripes running down the outer seams, and were tucked into a pair of highly polished half-wellingtons. Stalin was smiling.

After greetings had been exchanged Mountbatten asked Stalin when he thought the war against Japan would end. "Mr. Stalin he say 'very, very soon now'," translated the interpreter. History does not tell whether Stalin's optimism was based on Russian entry into the war or on the atom bomb. After some general conversation Mountbatten departed by the same circuitous route he had come.

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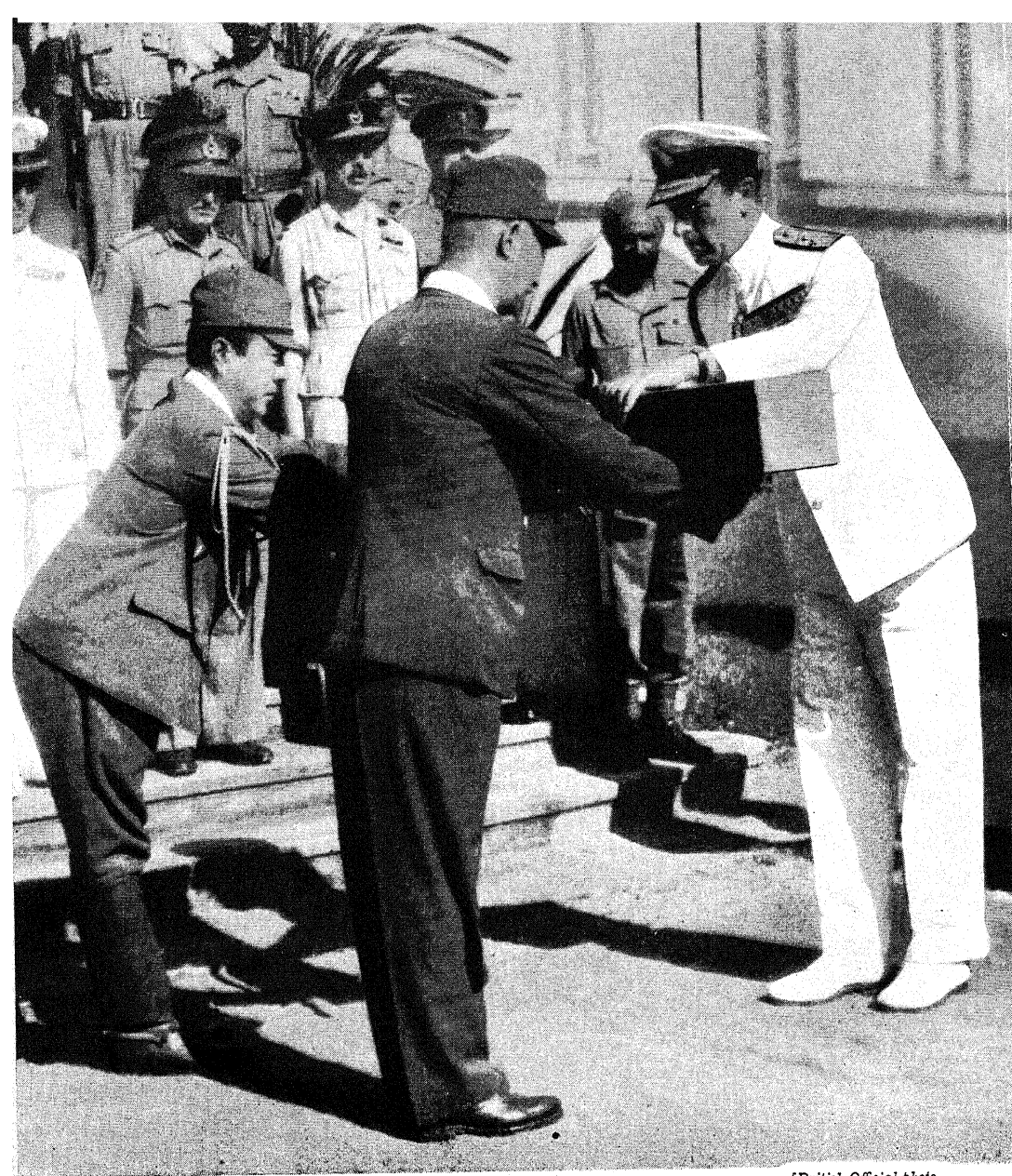
The next day he began his return flight to Kandy. Although he was undoubtedly delighted that he would not have to invade and conquer, there must have been moments when he wished that this last offensive, which he had planned so brilliantly, had not been denied him. During his entire tenure as Supreme Allied Commander he had made plan after plan only to see each one successively stamped "Cancelled" and the honour of one great victory—the only reward of a warrior's career—always denied him. From evidence gathered after the Japanese capitulation there can be no doubt that, although there might have been heavy casualties, "Operation Zipper" would undoubtedly have been an unparalleled success. The Japanese did not know where or when the Allies were going to land, nor had they organized a defence plan for the island of Singapore. For Mountbatten, war in South-East Asia had been one long anti-climax, ending in the greatest anti-climax of all—capitulation before victory.



*[British Official photo]*

Lady Louis•talks to Wounded





*[British Official photo]*

Count Terauchi, Supreme Commander Japanese Expeditionary Forces, Southern Regions, handing over his ceremonial sword in its case (a special mark of respect) to the Supreme Allied Commander at Saigon, 30th November, 1945

## CHAPTER VII

### PRO-CONSUL OF COMPROMISE

WHEN I arrived in South-East Asia, six months after the Japanese had been atomized into capitulation, the situation there was more critical from the Allies' point of view than it had been at any time during the Burma campaign. Separating the north-east and south-west corners of Mountbatten's command was a distance of over 6,000 miles. Within the limits of this theatre was a population of 128,000,000 native peoples, all indoctrinated with the effective Japanese propaganda line, "Asia for the Asiatics", and determined to resist the return of their European masters, augmented by three-quarters of a million armed Japanese and over 200,000 Allied prisoners of war and internees.

Roosevelt had been deeply interested in the future of South-East Asia and particularly in the relations between the white colonials and the brown native populations they controlled. He often stated he did not feel that France, the Netherlands and Britain had solved satisfactorily the problems of governing these populations, and it was his belief that if they did not energetically meet the situation growing out of increasing nationalism and industrialism, the people of South-East Asia would constitute, in twenty or thirty years, a threat to the peace of the entire world.

At the Cairo Conference, Chiang Kai-shek and Roosevelt discussed how long it would take the countries of South-East Asia to become self-governing.

"How long will it take Burma?" asked the President.

"Twenty years," replied the Generalissimo.

"How long will it take Java?"

"Thirty years," was the reply.

"French Indo-China?"

"One hundred years."

"And Borneo?"

"A thousand years."

Borneo was, in fact, the only country dominated by Europeans in all the South-East Asia area which had not demanded its freedom upon the defeat of Japan.

Mountbatten in his post-war rôle as pro-consul of this area had the responsibility of seeing that there was a minimum of friction in the return of the French, the Dutch and the British to the areas which they held before the war. It was impossible for any of the three countries in question

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to retake their possessions in the East by force of arms, because it is impossible profitably to occupy a country against the will of its people. Besides this, none of the three countries in question was in a financial position to support sufficient forces to do so.

When France had conquered Indo-China, and the Dutch had taken the Netherlands East Indies, and when the British had annexed Burma and begun to rule Malaya, they had not taken over countries—they had taken over a series of villages. No sooner had they developed communications than these villages began to jell into nations. It took the Japanese occupation to catalize each of these nations into solid political units. But because people hate change, they usually refuse to recognize it. This was Mountbatten's main job after the war—convincing the civil administrators of three countries that it was 1945, not 1845; that it was impossible to re-establish the old colonial system but not impossible to establish a new colonial system—a system whereby a merely formal position could be traded off for economic preference and goodwill.

Six months after the collapse of Japan the situation in South-East Asia was as follows:

In the north-east corner of Mountbatten's command lay the five states which compose French Indo-China. There were considerable civil disorders going on in the country caused by the Viet Minh party, composed largely of Annamites who were attempting to establish their independence from the French. So that there would be no doubt as to how they felt towards the French, the Annamites had taken advantage of the disorder following the Japanese collapse to form themselves into bands and inaugurate a reign of terror, not only killing or kidnapping as many French civilians as they could lay their hands on, but destroying as much property as possible.

West of French Indo-China lay Siam, the only land in South-East Asia not under the control of a European power and the only country in Mountbatten's theatre which had been a material ally to the Japanese. Her position was also unique in that she was the only country in the command which had a rice surplus, while, in particular, Burma and Malaya were facing famine. It was therefore one of Mountbatten's jobs to extract as much rice as possible from Siam (without paying extortionate prices for it, which could only be done by earning the goodwill of the government) and yet, at the same time, punish her for declaring war on the Allies.

Further to the west lay the British colony of Burma. Politically and economically the country was an absolute wreck. All the towns from Mandalay to Rangoon had been reduced to rubble during the reconquest of the country from the Japanese. With the destruction of the towns and communications had come the destruction of commerce. The result was

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that the only enterprise was the free enterprise of armed robbery. This was quite popular amongst the Burmese particularly because the police force was so weak that it could not take effective punitive measures.

In Malaya Mountbatten was faced with almost universal starvation and the complete breakdown of the internal economy of the country. One of Malaya's chief imports is rice and her chief export is rubber. There was, at that time, little or no rice to import. As for rubber, its price had been fixed so low that the growers could afford to pay their workers only a third of a living wage in an economy where costs were five to ten times what they had been before the war.

The worst situation with which Mountbatten had to contend was in Indonesia. Her forty million Indonesians had decided after the Japanese capitulation that they did not want their Dutch rulers back and so had proclaimed their independence. The Dutch claimed the whole independence movement in Indonesia was a Japanese-sponsored outrage and that its leaders should be shot. It soon became obvious, however, that it was the Dutch prisoners of war and internees still in central Java, where the Allies could not rescue them, and the British soldiers sent to Java to restore order, who would be shot first. This persuaded the Dutch to reconsider Indonesian independence. At any moment, however, it looked as if these negotiations between the Indonesian "Nationalists" and the Dutch with the British as mediators might fail in an explosion of blood, ruin and civil war.

On August 15, after the Japanese had agreed to unconditional surrender, Mountbatten was directed by the Combined Chiefs of Staff to complete the following tasks:

1. The reoccupation of key areas of occupied territories in order to secure effective control and to enforce the surrender and disarmament of Japanese forces.
2. The earliest release of British and Allied prisoners of war and internees.

Mountbatten subsequently issued the following directive to General Christison when he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in Indonesia:

1. To take such measures as you consider necessary to ensure the effective control of Japanese headquarters within your command;
2. To disarm and concentrate under Allied control all Japanese forces within the area under your command;

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3. To arrange for the care and disposal of all Allied prisoners of war and internees, in accordance with instructions which have been or may be issued to you separately.

In the execution of your rôle you will be guided by the principle that operations undertaken by British troops are confined as far as possible to the immediate areas in which they land.

Over and above this open directive he had another, which was none the less part of his instructions because it was not openly avowed.

The Japanese had marched through French Indo-China and, meeting little more than token resistance, had taken Siam, dashed down Malaya, and seized impregnable Singapore with a force half the size of the British garrison defending the area. After that they had hurled a lightning attack into Burma and, with only slight resistance, conquered the entire country. This had happened four years before. The British had been a long time in returning and their prestige had suffered in the meantime. Before the Russo-Japanese war the Oriental had regarded the white man as a superior and almost all-powerful being. Until 1941 there was unrest in the East, but the European was still respected. Now the Oriental had been taught by the Japanese that the white man could be very inferior and very weak. Before the Nipponese had come, the Oriental had disliked the foreigner but feared him. Now he still disliked him but no longer feared him. Burma, for instance, was about to achieve Dominion status. Soon the Burmese would be able to control their own trade relations and Britain would no longer be able to establish preferential tariffs, made in London, in order that the Burmese might find it cheaper if uneconomic to deal with Britain than with some of her competitors. Soon, when Burma was on the same footing as Canada and Australia, Britain would face stiff competition in maintaining her markets. She could not hope to do so, successfully, unless there was a change in the attitude of the Burmese. Their temper was now such that they preferred to trade with almost any other country.

Part of Mountbatten's job, then, in Burma and elsewhere in South-East Asia, was to restore in the minds of the native people a measure of that respect which had been lost when the Japanese had swarmed over the area in 1941. He must do what he could not only to make the peoples of South-East Asia respect the British but also to do something far more difficult: make them like the British to the extent of wanting to trade with them. In Australia I had seen that every type of goods made in England found a ready market because the people there felt they were showing Empire brotherhood by buying British goods. Mountbatten had the delicate task of re-creating the same profitable spirit in the minds of the natives. Burma was the laboratory in which he had his first chance to put

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this policy into action, for it had the double advantage of being the first territory liberated from the Japanese and also a former British colony. This was the problem he faced in Burma after the liberation.

Burma had begun to become politically conscious about thirty years before the war. National self-consciousness grew until, a year before the Japanese surged over her frontiers, dissatisfaction on the part of the politically minded with the rate of constitutional advance under British domination caused U Saw, then Prime Minister, to go to London to exact a promise that Burma should have Dominion status as soon as the war was over. The Japanese were occupying the government houses at Rangoon shortly after Whitehall had rejected the Burmese proposal.

Japan was spread so thinly over her vast stolen empire that she had to count her assets carefully. Why not let the Burmese rule their own country under Japanese supervision? After all, it would save Tokyo trouble. The result of this policy was that in 1934 Burmese "independence" was proclaimed and a Burmese embassy in Tokyo was opened. This, Burma's first taste of autonomy since 1885, did much to crystallize passionate nationalism among the Burmese, and throughout Asia.

The Japanese did not let down the curtain on the farce at this point, but organized, trained, and armed a Burma National Army to fight the Allies, officered entirely by Burmese under the command of a young general named Aung San. This young Burman had hitherto distinguished himself only by the poor marks he had received in school because he was so busy organizing nationalist demonstrations that he had no time to do his lessons.

The Japanese, with their arrogant and insect-like mentalities, were quick to show the contempt in which they held the proud Burmese. Soon even the Burmese "traitors", who had hailed the Jap as a welcome change from the Briton, found that they had exchanged a bull for a tiger. Rice was no longer distributed, so it rotted in the fields while it was almost impossible to get in the towns. The price of cloth quadrupled. Each village was required to supply its quota of slave labour and the native women had to submit to the lechery of the Japanese soldiers.

Early in 1945 Mountbatten was informed by his Intelligence department that the Burmese National Army under Aung San was ready to revolt against the Japanese. They suggested no "terms", nor were any agreed to by the British on the subject of reprisals. They merely informed the British that they meant to stage an uprising. Their proposal was reported to Mountbatten just before the fall of Mandalay. Although he knew that the Burmese would not be of much help in the advance towards Rangoon, he felt it essential that their offer should not be refused because, if they were not incorporated as Allies of the British, they could, as armed, trained, and organized guerillas, constitute a not negligible menace

to authority. His "enthusiasm" was not shared by the Governor of Burma, Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, nor by his staff, who, since the fall of Burma, had acted like a disgruntled bureaucratic government-in-exile at Simla, in northern India. Officially, of course, Mountbatten's plan was no business of theirs, since it was a purely military matter, but they took upon themselves to object that, if Mountbatten used the Burma National Army, he would be accepting the assistance of "traitors" who deserved no better fate than being shot out of hand.

Mountbatten pointed out that the soldiers of the Burma National Army were patriots rather than quislings, since they had joined up with the Japanese when they thought that they were going to bring independence to Burma and had turned to the British only when they realized that the Japanese had brought her servitude instead. Moreover, these men had never actually fought against the British. Why, Mountbatten argued, should men be treated as traitors because they had acted as patriots? This was an idea he had great difficulty in getting over to many of the Burma Civil Affairs officials. They were also at pains to point out that the members of this Burma Army and its leader, Aung San, were all members of the Burmese Anti-Fascist Organization, which, they claimed, had a Communistic bias, and Communism had become the magic word used to excuse any repression of native nationalism.

Mountbatten does not seem to have been affected by these arguments, for, after two weeks of negotiations with Maung Thein Po, the representative that the anti-Fascist League had sent to Kandy, he cabled for permission from the Combined Chiefs of Staff to use the Burma National Army. Permission was granted.

During the negotiations with Aung San and his army, Mountbatten went around repeating delightedly a low pun made by his staff Civil Affairs officer, Brigadier Gibbon, who described the whole thing as being "A most aung sanitary affair".

From then on the activities of the Fourteenth Army and the Burmese National Army were closely co-ordinated by constant wireless communication. The time eventually came when the armies were sufficiently close together for the Burmese to strike without fear of being massacred, and the army held a farewell parade for high-ranking Japanese officers, in Lower Burma, before "departing for the front to defend Burma against the Allies". They defended it by proceeding independently to take up positions against the Japanese along the Irrawaddy. Later, other units of the Burma Army were to prove of great value, assisting in the air-borne landing at Rangoon and mopping up isolated pockets of Japanese resistance from the Arakan to the Kachin Hills.

Mountbatten had assumed governorship of Burma in his capacity as military commander on January 1, 1944, by proclamation, and the

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position was to be taken over by the civil Governor only after a greater measure of peace had been restored. The policies which Mountbatten advanced as Military Governor met with violent opposition, both outspoken and tacit. Many Englishmen who had held civil posts in Burma before the war were now holding these same posts in the Military Government and were all for taking a strong hand with these Burmese who, in the name of patriotism, had betrayed them by welcoming the Japanese.

A nine-day wonder was created one day when Mountbatten called a meeting of Civil Affairs colonels shortly after Burma had been retaken. "I am well aware," he said to his audience, "that certain people at high levels who are unable to adjust themselves to a progressive policy in Burma will be using delaying tactics and other methods for obstructing my policy. The people concerned," he went on to say, "are being watched. They can accept a warning here and now, but if they make one false step they will be court-martialled, whatever their rank may be."

This public declaration of war against the blimps made many who secretly had been opposing Mountbatten shiver over their chota pegs, but it served the purpose of giving confidence to a number of liberal-minded young administrators, who were strengthened by knowing that Mountbatten was on their side.

Mountbatten's Burma policy was, however, just as realistic as it was liberal. At a staff meeting at Rangoon he once said that as Military Governor he was not going to have the so-called Burmese traitors shot because, in being traitors to the British, they were being loyal to their own country. He went on to say that, before the war, Britain had committed herself to the policy of making Burma self-governing. If this were the case, there was no possible excuse for executing the men to whom Britain was going to turn over the government of Burma. He pointed out that if he had been sent out there to re-establish Burma as a British colony his methods would have been quite different and he would have had every man executed who had collaborated with the Japanese.

The success of his policy is shown by the fact that the anti-Fascist Organization (later known as the anti-Fascist People's Freedom League) which controlled the resistance movement headed by Aung San, rather than the E.A.M. controlled the E.L.A.S. in Greece, remained as one organization representing the peoples of Burma as long as he was Military Governor. As soon as Dorman-Smith regained control, this "popular front" party began to split up into many different political groups.

Mountbatten's friendly attitude towards the Burmese was acknowledged by their giving a dinner in his honour at the Oriental Club in Rangoon. Present were 160 guests, mostly Burmese of every shade of political opinion. Although Aung San was there, his name was not on the list of speakers. Characteristically, Mountbatten, on hearing this, insisted



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that he should be invited to speak anyway. Four speeches were made in Mountbatten's honour and Aung San presented him with a Japanese officer's dagger on behalf of the patriotic Burmese forces. Much amusement was caused when it was pointed out that, by a dazzling coincidence, Mountbatten's name in Burmese is pronounced Maung Ba Tin, and that is also the name of Burma's most popular film star. The party lasted until long after midnight.

It is my firm belief that, had it not been for Mountbatten's liberal policies, Burma would have not been fitted within the framework of the British Commonwealth today. Late in 1946, when Aung San headed a delegation of Burmese on a trip to London to decide on the future status of their country—whether she would remain in the British Commonwealth or not—it was Aung San who decided she would. Had Burma suspected Britain's intentions, as she did before the war, this would never have happened. As I have said, when Aung San first made his proposal to Mountbatten he was considered as something of a bandit and certainly as a traitor. Mountbatten, however, saw the military necessity of having him on the side of the Allies and the political necessity of making him a friend rather than an enemy of the British. When Aung San came to Kandy, Mountbatten treated him as a distinguished patriot. Subsequently, when they got to know each other better, he treated the Burmese more as a personal friend. In fact, on one occasion he even saw fit to give Aung San personal advice. This was when he offered him a King's Commission as Major-General and the post of Inspector-General of the Burmese Army. Mountbatten, on the basis of his personal career, strongly recommended that he should accept this offer, stressing the advantages of security and honour which are the rewards of a military career. But Aung San preferred the less secure and possibly less honorable profession of politics.

Here, as elsewhere, Mountbatten recognized that being a patriot of one's own country did not necessarily brand one as a traitor of another, and here again he recognized the supreme importance of compromise.

But Burma was in many ways the easiest problem with which Mountbatten had to deal after the surrender. In Burma there was no really acute starvation, no uncontrollable lawlessness on a national scale. The prisoners of war and internees were accessible for immediate repatriation and rehabilitation, and the Japanese either surrendered or were destroyed. Burma had been fought over and order had been established by troops which were sufficiently numerous to be available for any contingency that might arise. In the rest of the theatre Mountbatten was not so fortunate.

On August 10 Japan asked for terms. Mountbatten, who had been recalled to attend conferences in London, saw that it was imperative for him to get back to his headquarters as fast as possible. As a result he made

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a record flight in which his giant York did the 6,345 miles between London and Kandy in thirty-one hours, averaging over 200 miles an hour including stops.

On August 14 the Japanese accepted terms of unconditional surrender, and on the next day Mountbatten assumed additional responsibility for Java, Bali and Lombok, and French Indo-China, south of the sixteenth parallel; as well as for Borneo and the other islands as soon as he could produce the necessary forces. Those additional responsibilities had been forced on him at a time when all his available resources were deployed preparatory to "Operation Zipper", with his only available bases still in India and Ceylon. The forces to be used for "Zipper" were five divisions, one armoured brigade, and one parachute brigade, with an additional two divisions in reserve for other operations. These troops were manifestly insufficient to police the vast area so suddenly released by the surrender.

Mountbatten's first fear was lest the three-quarters of a million Japanese throughout the million square miles of his command should not obey the Imperial order to lay down their arms. As there were more Japanese than Allied troops in his area, their failure to obey could have presented a serious problem, and he had to consider ways of conserving sufficient strength to deal with any major military development that might arise from their resistance. This further reduced the effectives available for policing his large and turbulent area. The headquarters of the Japanese forces in South-East Asia, under Supreme Commander Field Marshal Count Terauchi, were at Saigon and Dalat, in southern French Indo-China, and Mountbatten decided that the seizure by Allied airborne troops of Terauchi's headquarters might prevent a possible decision on the part of the Japanese to resist down to the last man on a theatre-wide scale. The sea lift—that is, the space in landing-craft for moving troops—available to Mountbatten throughout the area was barely sufficient to meet his minimum requirements for "Operation Zipper", and certainly was quite inadequate for the reoccupation of Java and Sumatra, except by stages. He was little better off in respect to air lift, for there was only enough available to reoccupy areas within range of the Burma air bases. This meant only Siam and lower French Indo-China, and to reach the second it was necessary to establish an air staging post at Bangkok as a stepping-stone to Saigon and the control of Terauchi's theatre headquarters.

It also became necessary for Mountbatten to establish Singapore as his main forward base and to plan to transfer his headquarters there as soon as possible; for it was now to become the focal point of the vast network of traffic and communications necessary to keeping his command operating.

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To reoccupy Malaya and Singapore he decided to carry out "Operation Zipper" in sufficient force to ensure success, even if there were considerable Japanese resistance. It is the opinion of several officers in the United States Army attached to the Command Headquarters, however, that the reason for Mountbatten's resolve to continue "Operation Zipper" was that it was considered essential to put up a great show of force when the British returned to Malaya, in an attempt to regain the prestige lost when Singapore was taken by the Japanese. They thought the British could have retaken Malaya with a mere token force. This would have left the rest of the troops at his disposal available for deployment to other areas to establish law and order immediately after the surrender. The delay, according to these officers, that resulted from continuing "Operation Zipper" instead of sending troops without delay to strategic points in Indonesia, was the principal factor contributing to the decay of law and order in that area. According to them, many Dutch civilians and Allied war prisoners paid with their lives for a demonstration in support of British prestige.

Mine-sweeping forces sailed from Ceylon at once, followed by the greater part of the ships, landing-craft, and forces. Four days later, when they were at sea, Mountbatten received instructions from MacArthur to effect no landings or reoccupations by military force until after the formal signing of the surrender in Tokyo. This was the first intimation Mountbatten had had that the operation he had pressed ahead so urgently must, as usual, be postponed. So far as MacArthur was concerned the military reasons for such a postponement were obvious.

While waiting, General MacArthur sent a message to Mountbatten through the British liaison office to "tell Lord Louis keep your pants on and don't worry".

It was general knowledge at headquarters that Mountbatten considered this a most undignified message and spent considerable thought composing the reply. "Will keep pants on," was his final answer, "if you take Hirohito's off."

At first, as might have been expected, "Zipper" jammed. Many of the smaller craft could not turn back because of the south-west monsoon, then at its height, which had turned the whole Bay of Bengal into a hell of wind and waves and which would certainly have caused no small damage and possible loss. Mountbatten decided that, although the duration of the delay was uncertain, the only course possible was to hold the forward forces afloat. He assigned Admiral Power, then in command of the East Indies Fleet, with the difficult task of supplying them with fuel, water, provisions, and mail while they lay off the lee of the Nicobar Islands. The delay lasted twelve days.

This time was not wasted by the Supreme Commander. He ordered

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supplies of food, clothing and medicine to be taken to as many of the Allied prisoner-of-war camps as possible. Lady Louis was then in South-East Asia making a tour by air of the whole command, as superintendent of St. John Nursing Association, to investigate requirements in medicinal and relief stores and to advise on methods of treatment and evacuation. As Mountbatten had told me at our first meeting, she went into many of the liberated areas before the troops had arrived and returned to Kandy to tell of the frightful conditions existing in some of the internee and prisoner-of-war camps. Her quick action in getting headquarters sufficiently aroused to arrange for the prompt evacuation of many of the internees and prisoners of war in the liberated areas was responsible for saving many lives. It was she who flew to Java and Sumatra before any troops had landed and first reported to her husband that there might be serious trouble in that area.

The formal surrender was signed at Tokyo on September 2 and the next day a force of Royal Marines, having landed in Malaya at Penang, sent news of the surrender of the local Japanese commanders to Mountbatten.

During the next ten days the tactical headquarters of a division and one brigade were flown from Burma to Bangkok and an air staging base was established there. From that point elements of a brigade were flown into French Indo-China and as soon as they landed Mountbatten's Inter-service Control Commission took over the Japanese Supreme Headquarters. During that same ten days landings in force were made on Malaya. On September 12, in the presence of representatives of the armed forces of the United States, India, Australia, China, France and Holland, as well as Britain, Mountbatten accepted the surrender of the Japanese expeditionary forces, Southern Regions, in the Municipal Building at Singapore. Field Marshal Count Terauchi was not there to sign the surrender in person, for the sixty-six-year-old Supreme Commander of the Japanese Expeditionary Force was lying ill and could not be moved from his Saigon headquarters. So Mountbatten had to wait until later for the surrender of Terauchi's sword which, he said, was the one souvenir of the campaign he wanted. There was some delay in this transaction, since Terauchi had left his sword, at home in Tokyo, and it proved necessary to have his wife take it out of storage and fly it down by stages to Singapore. In this matter, moreover, there was sharp disagreement between MacArthur and Mountbatten. MacArthur's staff believed that the mystical significance of officers' swords in the Japanese Army required the Allies to seize them sparingly in order to preserve the Japanese chain of command. It was felt necessary that Japanese officers retain discipline over their troops during the prolonged period of readjustment. Mountbatten preferred to force the Japanese to lose face and

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acceded with reluctance to a compromise policy of sword-snatching. Eventually Terauchi surrendered to him both his family swords, one of which Mountbatten presented to his cousin the King. He once showed me the sword he kept in Singapore and it was easy to see why it was numbered among the art treasures of Japan. Its blade dates back to the 13th century, when it was made for an ancestor of Count Terauchi. It was kept in a special wooden sheath and was transferred to its steel sheath, embossed with Imperial sixteen-petalled gold chrysanthemums, only on state occasions. Accompanying the sword were lengthy instructions on its care.

It was not until three weeks after the Japanese surrender that Mountbatten could get his communications and supplies sufficiently reorganized to go into the outlying areas of his vast command. The only forces at his disposal for use in the areas which he now controlled were six Indian divisions, two British divisions, and one East African division, besides two assault brigades. He also had to contend with a shortage of shipping, so acute that it did not permit the Allies to reach more than a few key-points of the command.

The termination of war and Japanese responsibility meant that liberation took the form of chaos in which crimes of rape, robbery and murder went unpunished. Reports of violence of all kinds flowed into headquarters at an alarming rate. Mountbatten had anticipated such a state of affairs and a month before had ordered Field Marshal Terauchi to send his Chief of Staff, General Numata, to Rangoon to discuss with his own Chief of Staff, General Browning, and the Allied Control Council, the terms of future surrender.

The most important decision Mountbatten made at this time was, as MacArthur had anticipated, to keep the Japanese chain of command intact so he could use Japanese troops throughout the area to prevent complete disintegration. Under his terms each Japanese commander was to be responsible for the maintenance of order, by force if necessary. He was also made responsible for the behaviour of the troops under him until such time as he could be relieved by Allied forces, and until he and his troops could be concentrated and disarmed prior to being sent back to Japan. This was a most audacious decision for Mountbatten to make and was perhaps a mistake, though it is difficult to think of an alternative course, for it put him in the position of using Japanese troops to police native peoples whom the Allies had supposedly "liberated" from the tyranny of Japan. In fact, on one occasion in Java, Japanese batteries sent down an artillery bombardment in support of a British infantry attack against Indonesian positions. There can be little doubt that this step was unpopular among the natives. Here they found themselves, after three years of suffering under Japanese arrogance and tyranny,

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finally liberated, only to be subjected again to policing by their former tyrants. They inevitably came to identify their liberators with their oppressors.

His decision also caused some diplomatic embarrassment vis-à-vis Russia when questions about it were asked by the Ukrainian delegation at the U.N.O. meeting in Paris. The American troops in Korea, however, found themselves in the same position and, although it was not necessary in that area to keep a large-scale chain of command or to use Japanese troops in any number, some were nevertheless needed for sentry duty to guard ammunition dumps against irresponsible Korean extremists. The same policy was followed by United States Marine Corps commanders in North China.

Mountbatten's idea was to prevent the Japanese from merely laying down their arms, which would have been used by irresponsible elements of the community to engage in terrorism and looting. The plan worked effectively in almost direct proportion to the degree in which the chain of command was kept intact. The area in which, unfortunately, it was least effective was in Java, where General Nagano, commander of the Japanese forces there, was unable to retain his post. In some instances the use of the Japanese troops worked extremely well. In Bandoeng, a town seventy miles inland from Batavia, where there were many Dutch citizens, the Indonesian extremists at first captured the airfield and many of the larger buildings in the town without being opposed by the Japanese troops in the vicinity. Later, when the Japanese commander in the area was given direct instructions to retake the town, he did so, and held it until the arrival of a British brigade. On another occasion, in Soerabaja, many Japanese surrendered their arms to Indonesian extremists, but when ordered to retain them they disappeared for twenty-four hours into the surrounding countryside and returned more heavily armed than before. On yet another occasion Japanese troops caught the spirit of Dutch colonizers and suppressed an Indonesian nationalist demonstration by making the parading nationalists, at bayonet point, eat the various badges and arm-bands they were wearing. If, however, the Japanese were executing their orders satisfactorily in some areas, in others they were handing over their arms to Indonesian extremists and, moreover, teaching them how to use these arms most effectively against the Allies in resisting the restoration of "colonial servitude".

On this subject a report that was written by Lt.-General Numata on the conditions of Japanese personnel, after a tour he had made of the command six months after the surrender, may well be quoted:

"I am now strongly reminded of the impressive message of His Excellency Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, to forces under

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his command immediately after the Japanese surrender, to the effect that 'to retaliate against the Japanese is for the Allied forces to lower themselves to the same level of the Japanese forces who wronged them'. At all the places visited I was informed of the just treatment by the Allies of the Japanese personnel in the largest majority of instances, and personally witnessed the willingness with which they were carrying out the duties and tasks arising from the terms of the surrender."

A few days after the surrender ceremony an official in charge of a jail in Singapore invited Press photographers to take photographs of his high-ranking Japanese prisoners in the act of bowing down with their foreheads touching the ground. Mountbatten happened to hear about this and ordered the official to be removed from his post. That same night he issued a statement in which he said that these Japanese were being accused of serious war crimes, that their punishment would be meted out to them if and when they had been found guilty and that, meanwhile, it was against his policy that frivolous bullying of this nature should be inflicted on people who, if they were guilty of the acts of which they were suspected, were deserving of a punishment far more dignified and irrevocable. He added that anyone who imposed on the Japanese petty tyrannies similar to those the Japs had inflicted in the past was demeaning himself to the same level as theirs.

A month after the Japanese surrender Mountbatten presented the city of Kandy with a Japanese field piece, with an appropriate bronze plaque attached, and moved his headquarters to Singapore. A large apartment house had been requisitioned for the command offices and he had his office on the top floor. From the roof of the building fluttered the flags of Great Britain, the United States, France, China and the Netherlands, denoting that it was an Allied headquarters and housed staff officials of all these nationalities.

He took up residence in Government House and resumed very much the same schedule he had kept to in Ceylon, riding before breakfast around the grounds on one of the plump official horses, reading a large selection of American periodicals, lunching with members of his staff, and usually dining quietly. He made one change, however, for now he held his staff meetings in the morning instead of in the afternoon, which he now devoted to reading the reports which came in from various parts of his theatre. These were, generally speaking, more discouraging than those which had come in during the worst days of the Burma campaign. This was particularly true of the news from Java. If Lady Louis had given him some intimation of the trouble ahead in Java she had forecast only a shadow of things to come, for the situation was fast turning into a

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question and the question into a problem and the problem into an issue. "Intelligence", or the lack of it, had supplied Mountbatten with no idea of what to expect in the island the Dutch had once described as the ideal colony governed by the world's most ideal colonizers.

He received his first direct information about it from a group of observers who flew to Java on September 8. Four days later they reported that "the bulk of the native population in Java is indifferent to all political movements". They went on to say there was evidence of a nationalist movement in the display of flags but that the movement seemed to be led chiefly by intellectuals. However, the Japanese officials consulted took the possibilities of a large-scale uprising very seriously. The report ended with a statement so naïve as to be almost ironic: "Once transport and security are solved our task will be comparatively simple."

In retrospect this report clearly shows that the observations on which it was based were superficial and hasty. True, the intellectuals were to be seen in the streets of Batavia, decorating buildings with the flag of Indonesian independence and driving around in large cars they had liberated from the Japanese. These proceedings were but a faint parody, however, of the deep emotional upheavals which had turned the entire country from a tropical garden into a furnace raging with murder, rape, robbery and passion, heated by release from years of control and ancient resentments against contemptuous masters.

On August 17, two days after the Japanese acceptance of the Potsdam peace terms, the Japanese, to save their own necks for the time being, had mollified the Indonesians by permitting them officially to proclaim their independence, in the hope that they would join forces with them in repelling the return of the Dutch. When Mountbatten made the Japanese responsible for the maintenance of law and order until the Allies were able to return, a muddle resulted in which some Japanese laid down their arms to the Indonesians, others joined them, and a yet larger percentage fought them in the execution of their orders. The Indonesian nationalist leaders were no longer in control. The dacoity of Burma had become the anarchy of Java.

. . If certain violent elements in Java were out of hand, the Indonesian nationalist group still had a majority of conservatives who deplored violence. The Dutch, holding stately, stupid and stubborn discussions across the Sunda Straits in Singapore, were doing little to win this element to their side, although many Indonesian nationalist leaders were well disposed towards them.

The discussions at Singapore between the British and the Dutch authorities were beginning to make it clearer every day that the Dutch were incapable of realizing that the Indonesian independence movement was quite legitimate and spontaneous, and was fully comparable to that,



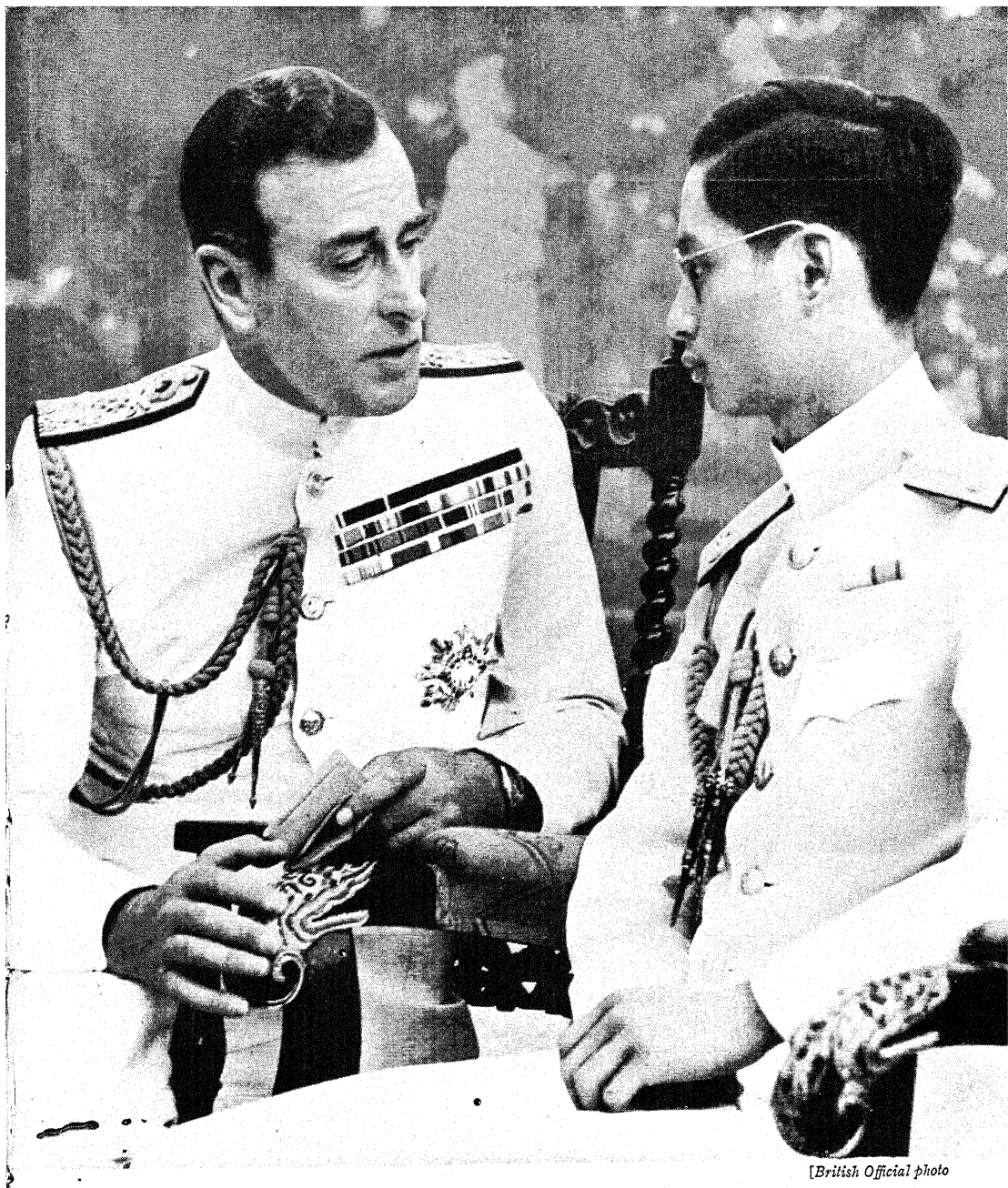
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for instance, which had animated the Burmese. Instead of treating its leaders as Aung San and the Burmese National leaders had been treated by the returning British military government, they concentrated on the fact that, like the Burmese movement, it had "played into the hands of the Japanese", and insisted on considering the whole thing as treasonable activity directly sponsored and instigated by Japan, and nothing more. Their attitude was that to negotiate with these Indonesians would show their weakness, if not folly. They did not realize that the national aspirations, which they had been able to keep under control before the war by such expedients as exiling or executing the few competent nationalist leaders, had received a tremendous impetus from the fact that the Dutch had been forced to, and did, run for their lives when Indonesia was invaded by the Japanese. This accelerated national movement was only a part, of course, of the great national ferment that had been boiling up all over the East, and had been fanned by Japanese propaganda about "Asia for the Asiatics".

In the meantime British forces were landing in Java. The only troops that Mountbatten had available for the islands were three Indian divisions. These divisions were based one at Batavia, one at Soerabaja, and one at Sumatra. The policy of the British Government in the disposition of these troops was (as in the case of French Indo-China) to station them at strongpoints in the country in order to round up the Japanese, liberate and repatriate the prisoners of war and internees, and maintain order while these two objectives were being achieved.

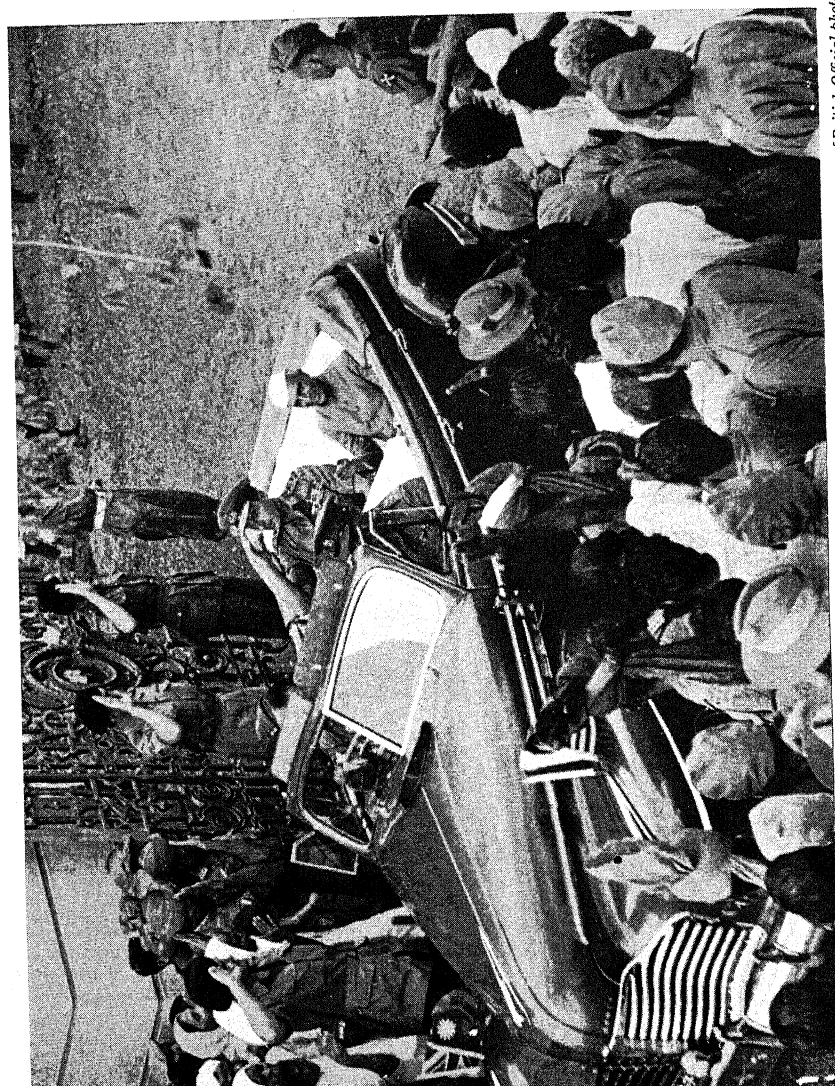
To the Indonesians it soon became obvious that the presence of these British troops was only a preliminary to the return of the Dutch, since it was clear to them that, however the British might argue to the contrary, the practical effect of the arrival of the British troops was to hold the ports until the Dutch could amass enough troops to return in force.

The situation began to develop into a war when British troops holding strongpoints were fired on by Indonesian terrorists. Terrorism did not stop there. The next move was to fire from ambush on trucks full of prisoners of war and internees that the British were conveying from camps in the interior to ports where they were to be rehabilitated. When these incidents first occurred the British troops did not fire until they were fired upon, but the situation fast became worse. A couple of hand grenades were hurled into a truck full of Dutch women and children being evacuated. Several such incidents made the temper of the troops rise. At first many had favoured the Indonesian cause and its attempt at national self-determination, but, under the impact of atrocities which they had witnessed or heard reported, their mood changed. Steps were taken to attack and liquidate Indonesian strongpoints, where the worst



[British Official photo

Lord Louis and the King of Siam



[British Official photo]

With Pandit Nehru in Singapore, 1946



elements of the terrorists were to be found. This led to an incident which shocked the whole world.

On November 23, 1945, twenty Indian enlisted men, with four members of an air crew, took off in a C-47 bound from Batavia to Semarang, and crash-landed as a result of engine trouble about eight miles from the airport from which they had started. A column of infantrymen was sent out to where a passing fighter plane had observed the C-47 crash to escort the survivors back to Batavia. They found no trace of the survivors, so the next day another party went out to investigate further. In searching near the wrecked plane they found the mutilated trunks of two soldiers and two heads with tongues torn out by the roots. On questioning some nearby inhabitants they were told that a group of survivors had been taken to the nearby village of Bekasi, a strongpoint held by about two thousand terrorist members of the Black Buffalo Society. About three days later a group of infantrymen and a detachment of tanks went to wipe out this position, from which the terrorists were staging raids against the British. They took the village without much opposition and liberated the tenants of the local jail. One of these half-starved wretches told of the scene she had witnessed through the window of her cell when some twenty naked men had been marched into the village, tied to stakes, slashed with swords, executed and thrown into a shallow grave. The place where the woman had seen the corpses buried was dug up, the corpses were recovered and orders were issued for the village to be evacuated. Then the troops in cold fury burned it to the ground.

When the news of this incident reached Mountbatten he was shocked. He issued at once a stern order saying in effect that it was perfectly understandable that soldiers after discovering such an incident should be strongly moved and react as they did, but that, whereas reprisals visited deliberately on guilty and innocent alike might be understandable if taken in the heat of the moment and under intolerable provocation, any form of calculated reprisal whatever, or punitive measures of that kind taken in cold blood, was absolutely against his policy and would be punished with the greatest rigour.

From the military point of view Mountbatten did his best, while negotiations were going on between the Dutch Government and the nationalist "Republic" leaders, to stay as much as possible within his directive. Leaflets were dropped on the Indonesians warning them against further outrages and great care was exercised in the use of aircraft to ensure that only known concentrations of Indonesian troops were hit.

To the north in French Indo-China Mountbatten's policy was basically the same as that in the Netherlands East Indies, namely to carry out the directive given him after Potsdam with the smallest possible

number of British casualties. He was, however, more successful in the French territory than in the Dutch. This was the direct result of a meeting which Mountbatten had held at the end of September 1945, when he paid a flying visit to his advanced headquarters at Singapore. He had instructed his commanders in French Indo-China and the Netherlands East Indies and their respective French and Dutch advisers to confer with him there. Lieut.-General Gracey brought with him Monsieur Cedille from Saigon and Rear-Admiral Patterson was accompanied by Mr. Van Der Plass from Batavia. After seeing his British commanders he saw their two advisers one after the other, and is reputed to have told them very definitely that it was their business to contact the leaders of the Annamites and Indonesians respectively and to point out that the British had not come to fight them but to carry out the terms of the Japanese surrender. He is understood to have said to them that, if only they would get hold of the actual leaders themselves and treat them as responsible men who sincerely represented a genuine movement, he was sure they would be able to come to terms with them and thus avoid bloodshed and friction.

Whether this policy would have worked in the Netherlands East Indies, if it had been put into effect at that period, it is impossible to say. No sooner had Van Der Plass opened negotiations with the Indonesians than his efforts were nullified by his being disowned and his promises repudiated by the Dutch Government at the Hague. M. Cedille, on the other hand, was notably successful in contacting the Annamite leaders in French Indo-China. The result was that, although there was at times bitter fighting between the Annamite forces and the French, the British were rarely attacked by the Annamites. The occasions on which the British were attacked, however, were usually the fault of irresponsible Annamites who did not obey their leaders. Thanks to this fortunate state of affairs, very little British blood was spilt in French Indo-China in comparison with the heavy casualties Britain sustained in the Dutch islands to the south.

Also, from the military point of view, the situation was far better for the French than for the Dutch. Indeed, Mountbatten had to urge that as few Dutch troops as possible be permitted to come out from Holland until the situation in Indonesia became more settled. This decision was reached after the fledgling troops the Dutch first sent out there had already caused considerable trouble because they were, for the most part, trigger-happy, punitive-minded youngsters who would not hesitate, if frightened, to let loose a spray of machine-gun bullets on a defenceless Indonesian mob. Moreover, they created further difficulties by occasional instances in which they fired accidentally on British Indian troops. On the other hand, the end of the war found the French with several divisions

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ready for immediate dispatch to the Orient which were thoroughly trained, disciplined and experienced in battle. These troops arrived in each succeeding month in greater and greater numbers and were soon able to take over from the British, who were withdrawn for service elsewhere. By May 1946 Mountbatten's only remaining responsibility in French Indo-China was to act as MacArthur's agent in the repatriation of the Japanese.

To the south of Siam a very complicated situation had developed between the British and the Siamese since the surrender. When Siam, under Japanese influence, declared war on Britain and America, Britain accepted the declaration of war and America did not. A fine drama of emotionality lay behind America's action or lack of it. The scene was laid in the office of the Secretary of State in the year 1942 and the actors were the Siamese Ambassador, a slender, smooth-faced little fellow with a high-pitched Oxford accent, and the saintly Cordell Hull. It is alleged that the Siamese Ambassador came in to announce in tears that a state of war existed between Siam and the United States. Cordell Hull took pity on him and to mitigate his grief assured him the United States would not accept the declaration of war. This assurance was seriously to affect later dealings between Britain and Siam.

When the war came to an end, negotiations began almost immediately between British and Siamese representatives. The British shrewdly contended reparations were due to them because Siam not only had permitted the Japanese to march through the country on their way to Singapore, but had joined forces with them, declaring war on the British, thus violating a non-aggression pact they had made in 1941. The Siamese had previously supplied the Japanese with many million dollars' worth of goods and services, furnished them with bases, and garrisoned certain areas jointly with them. Moreover, they had accepted from Japan as a gift four states in northern Malaya and two Shan states in Burma. The former were totally and the latter partially occupied by Siam.

On the other hand, there had been an active resistance movement against the Japanese led by no other person than the Regent of Siam, Luang Pradit, who under the remarkable Biblical code name of "Ruth" had been in touch with S.E.A.C. through a radio set he had concealed in his house ever since the formation of the command. Indeed, in March 1944 he had informed Mountbatten that the Siamese underground, which had been secretly armed and trained largely by members of the American O.S.S., was ready to revolt. Because Mountbatten was unable at that time to synchronize this revolt with the arrival of any of his own forces, as he had been able to in the case of Aung San's army in Burma, and because he feared the revolt would end in a complete massacre by the Japanese, he instructed Luang Pradit to postpone it. The effect of this

advice was also to preserve intact the status of Siam as an Axis satellite subject to British reparations.

It was largely because of this active underground that Mountbatten decided Siam should be regarded as friendly for military purposes. But the Foreign Office ruled that she should be required to give some concrete evidence of good faith, that she should make restitution for the damage done to British interests in Siam, and in particular to the interests of those territories bordering on Siam for the welfare of which Great Britain is responsible. Downing Street was prepared to overlook Siamese hostility in return for rice and other valuable considerations, and drew up an agreement of twenty-one points which were to be discussed by the Siamese delegation sent to Kandy prior to the signing of a peace treaty between the two countries.

On the day before the delegation left Kandy to lay the terms of the peace before their Government Mountbatten gave a lunch for them at the King's Pavilion. They appeared clad in formal white uniforms blazoned with decorations, the head of the commission even wearing his dress sword, which was a little too long for him and clanked on the flagged terrace as they drank cocktails before lunch. The affair was proceeding gaily until, as the guests filed in to lunch, Mountbatten relieved the leader of the delegation of his unmanageable weapon so he might be more comfortable at table. From that moment his earlier air of cheerfulness changed to one of acute misery, and each fresh sally by Mountbatten was received with an expression that gradually became almost tearful. When Mountbatten was saying good-bye to the bowing chief of the delegation after the lunch he suddenly remembered the sword, and, taking it from a nearby table, returned it to the lugubrious official, who responded by breaking again into a happy smile. He bowed twice and departed. His behaviour perplexed Mountbatten until he was told later that the delegate had thought his sword had been taken from him because he was to be held as a hostage while the rest of the delegation returned to Siam.

No sooner did the Siamese delegation reach Bangkok than Siam began to play the old game she had become adept at during two centuries of playing off British and French colonial interests, one against the other. Ruth may have wept among the alien corn, but Pradit was perfectly at home when it came to rice. Washington was approached, and a claim was submitted by the Prime Minister, Seni Pramoj, that the British terms were so severe they would be "enough to make Siam a slave state for years to come".

To grant Britain supplies of certain Siamese exports such as tin, rubber, oil and rice would hardly turn Siam into a slave state for years to come, but she was again counting on the sentimentality of the United States, which had kept her from declaring war on Siam three and a half



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years before. They were aware also of official American opposition to foreign monopolies and cartels, and to the State Department's tradition that the British were not averse to stealing a march on American traders. They were up to the old game of playing off the Americans against the British, in order to avoid paying any indemnities and at the same time assuring themselves of a plentiful supply of manufactured goods from the United States, a blasphemous parody of British economic policy which naturally infuriated Downing Street.

They gauged the attitude of America correctly, for she immediately stepped in and asked the Siamese to sign "nothing until you hear from me". In the meantime Siam continued her intrigues. Parties were given for the members of the O.S.S. who had been engaged in the Siamese underground and two palaces were turned over to the A.T.C., where all accommodation, food, and whiskey for officers in transit were free. Siamese officials poured their tale of woe about the "harsh and humiliating terms of the Kandy agreement" into the ears of every passing American and cited the use of airfields in Siam as bases for operations against the Annamites as an example of Britain's bullying ways as well as evidence of her determination to suppress freedom throughout the Orient. Another shriek of protest was uttered with an air of injured innocence when the French tried to reclaim a part of southern Cambodia, which the Siamese, with Japanese support, had extorted from the Vichy regime in return for the payment of a ridiculously small sum.

But, while complaining loud and long to United States authorities about the imperialistic ways of the British, the Siamese could not have been more amiable and generous towards them. They understood well that in Malaya and Burma, because of conditions under Japanese occupation, rice stocks were a million and a half tons short for the year and the strength of the argument that, if Britain would support Siam's application for membership in the United Nations, she, in return, would gladly supply a million and a half tons of surplus rice she had stored up to relieve the shortage. On these terms a peace was negotiated and signed on January 1. Mountbatten decided further to cement good relations between Britain and Siam by paying a visit to King Ananda Mahidol at Bangkok late in January officially to celebrate the conclusion of the agreement, bringing to an end the state of war between the two countries.

This was the only occasion on which the differences between Britain and the United States in Siam flared into the open. General Terry, as Senior United States Military Officer in that theatre, had been asked to be present during the ceremony at which the victory of the Allies over the Japanese was to be celebrated by a parade of Allied troops along the main street of Bangkok, reviewed by the highest ranking officials in the



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area, but, as General Terry could not attend, Brigadier-General Timberman was asked to act as American representative in his stead. An American officer told me that from the moment of Timberman's arrival with his party in the Siamese capital it became evident the Allied victory "show" was to be "all-British". This was made increasingly obvious at an official dinner on the evening after the parade. General Timberman arrived to find that he was not sitting at the high table with Mountbatten and the Siamese king, as he should have been as United States representative, but at a rather low table with junior officials of the Government. This slight could not be overlooked and Timberman stalked out of the dining-room without having sat down.

Letting such an incident occur was not typical of Mountbatten, who usually fell over himself to treat the American members of his staff with all fairness and consideration. When an argument occurred between British and American members of his staff he would almost invariably take the side of the Americans. Rumour has it that this unfortunate seating arrangement occurred because the wife of a British vice-admiral refused to be placed below a brigadier-general.

Characteristically Mountbatten made the personal part of his visit to Bangkok a great success. By such friendly gestures as giving the young King a jeep, which was promptly stolen by a loyal subject from in front of his palace, and attending informally the nightly dance at the Thai officers' club, he did much to re-establish Siamese-British relations. He also told the Prime Minister the internal economy of Siam would be wrecked by giving 1,500,000 tons of rice and that Britain should be willing to buy it. While he was there he was awarded Siam's highest honour, the Order of the White Elephant, but as he had to ask for Foreign Office authority before accepting it he was obliged to refuse it temporarily. Three days later he was informed he might accept it but that he could not wear it because of the strained state of relations existing between Britain and the former ally of Japan.

One day when his family were examining and admiring the decoration, which is the most expensive and elaborate I have ever seen, Lady Louis, well knowing her husband's weakness for Orders, said: "Don't you think it would make a nice top to a powder-box for me? After all, you are ~~not~~ permitted to wear it." His only answer was a defensive glance as he closed the velvet box with a snap.

The rice, however, was not as forthcoming as Siamese promises. Siam, like the rest of South-East Asia, wanted manufactured goods and was going to hold out for them. It was officially explained that the rice crop had not lived up to expectations that year. Seni Pramoj, with whom Mountbatten had just concluded his agreements, fell from power, and Siam demanded for her rice a higher price to be paid in the

form of consumer goods. On this occasion Mountbatten punned wearily, "Rice makes Might".

A month later he again visited Siam, this time unofficially, with his wife and his daughter, Patricia, who was then on leave from her post as W.R.N.S. Signals Officer in New Delhi. I was there at the time and had a chance to talk to many of the Ministers of the Siamese Government, who were equally garrulous in their praises of Mountbatten as they were in their reasons for not delivering any rice. One of the better excuses was offered me by the Premier himself. He explained that up-country there were families in which there were two or three males but that cloth was so scarce they had only one pair of trousers between them and so could go out only one at a time to harvest the rice. Therefore, he said, though there was plenty of rice in the fields, there was a shortage of it even in Bangkok. I was also smilingly assured by Luang Pradit, who had so often expounded his liberalism and his hatred of the Japanese, that if the United States did not soon send some manufactured goods to Siam maybe the Siamese would not think that the Japanese policy of "Asia for the Asiatics" was so bad an idea after all. I learned later that Mountbatten saw the new Premier on this visit and received assurances from him that their agreement would be kept and the rice delivered without further delay.

But the Supreme Commander's plane had barely left the runway before this Premier was out of office, and no rice was to be forthcoming until the shortage became so acute in Malaya and Burma that the free enterprisers of Siam could ask and get any price they demanded. To make Siam's attitude comprehensible one must take into account the fact that during these negotiations, on which the lives of thousands of starving natives depended, the American *Chargé d'Affaires* was encouraging the Siamese and softly wooing them by diplomatic serenades, promising a golden era of Siamese-American friendship.

Mountbatten had by this time withdrawn most of his troops from French Indo-China and Siam, as he had no further responsibility in either country except as MacArthur's agent to co-ordinate the repatriation of the Japanese. The situation in Netherlands East Indies was improving a little but, in India, politicians were asking more and more frequently what steps were being taken to prevent the use of Indian soldiers and materials against Asiatic peoples "fighting for their freedom". There were, at that time, serious upheavals throughout the whole of India. The Royal Indian Navy had mutinied at their largest base, Bombay, and in a few days over 220 people had been killed and over 1,000 injured. At Rangoon some 150 members of the Royal Indian Air Force had gone on a hunger strike and there were intimations that these strikes might spread to the Indian troops in Netherlands East Indies, many of whom

were beginning to complain audibly that they were playing a dishonest rôle in securing the colonial empire of the Dutch at the expense of the native population. These unfortunate events were taking place on the eve of Britain's current threat to give India self-government.

In this delicate situation the British Government fortunately strengthened Mountbatten's hand and indicated its support of the liberal policy of conciliation he had sponsored by announcing his promotion in substantive rank from Captain to Rear-Admiral at the beginning of 1946. Under this seal of approval he and Wavell were able to proceed with their plans for dealing with Indian turbulence against the advice of all the "blimps", the "When-I-was-in-Poona" brigade of club-chair critics who frowned on any policy short of "shooting the ruffians down like dogs".

In February, when Mountbatten was in New Delhi visiting Lord Wavell, the Viceroy of India, the latter told him that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, President of the Constituency of the Congress Party, proposed to visit the large Indian community in Malaya, and suggested that it would be a good thing if he were invited to do so. Another reason the Viceroy might have given was that Nehru was scheduled to become the first Prime Minister of India and that it might be wise to be as agreeable to him as possible, an attitude which had not characterized official British behaviour towards him hitherto. As it would have been diplomatically difficult for Wavell to entertain him in New Delhi, it was thought best that Mountbatten should do so in Malaya, where the Hindus and Moslems could not see it being done!

Mountbatten had been away on tour of his theatre while arrangements for the visit were being made. The British military authorities were displeased and did not propose even to put a car at Nehru's disposal to facilitate his getting round to see his fellow Indians. Possibly this attitude on their part had been caused to some extent by the trouble they had had with the Indian National Army, which had been formed by the Japanese out of the Indian contingents that had surrendered after the fall of Malaya to fight against the British. Those troops had been hailed by members of the Congress Party not as traitors, but as heroes fighting for the liberation of their country from enslavement to the British Raj. Naturally this point of view was calculated to annoy the British soldier fighting on the boundaries of India against the Jap. It was well understood, therefore, that the British administration at Singapore intended to ignore the visit except by posting armed M.P.s all over the city in case there should be rioting by the Indians or demonstrations in favour of the Indian National Army. The city was alive with rumours of what might happen. Maybe the visit might be the signal for a general mutiny of all Indian troops in Malaya, maybe even in all South-East Asia.

Two days before Nehru was to arrive Mountbatten returned to

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Singapore. He took a very firm line with the military authorities about Nehru's coming reception. If the military authorities thought Nehru ought not to come, because his coming might lead to difficulties with the Indian population and the Indian troops, they should have made that quite clear before he was invited; but a guest visiting Malaya was entitled to the ordinary courtesies, and, in the case of a man of Nehru's standing, to much more than those. The military authorities arranged to place a car at Nehru's disposal only after Mountbatten had told them he would let Nehru have his own car if they did not produce one.

After Mountbatten's return the official attitude changed overnight. Two hundred passes were issued to leading members of the Indian community to the airport at Kalang so they could suitably welcome the Pandit, and British trucks were put at the disposal of Indians in outlying districts to bring them into Singapore to greet the Pandit on his arrival. "They'll arrive here in a damn' sight better humour if they don't have to walk," was the comment of one official who understood such matters. The order to line the streets with M.P.s was countermanded, presumably because Mountbatten feared there might be a repetition of an incident which had taken place a month before, when young and somewhat panicky British military police had fired into an unarmed mob of Chinese. In such circumstances, M.P.s are often more apt to provoke incidents than to save situations.

Driving through the streets of Singapore on the morning scheduled for Nehru's arrival was a startling experience, for thousands of Indians, most of whom had served in the Indian National Army, lined the streets waiting patiently in orderly ranks for the Pandit.

As it turned out he was several hours late, for his 'plane had had "engine trouble" over Rangoon and had made a forced landing in a field near that city. It was considered by some to be a significant coincidence that the leaders of the Indian community in Rangoon should have happened to be waiting on the field when the Pandit made his "forced landing". It was also thought worth noting that the pilot of Nehru's 'plane, who was an ardent supporter of the Indian Congress, had been forced down near Rangoon, for the British had short-sightedly refused Nehru permission to stop there on his way to Singapore.

When Nehru finally arrived he was received by prominent local Indians and then went direct to Government House, where Mountbatten had invited high-ranking Service and civilian authorities to meet him at a quick and informal lunch. Next on the programme for Nehru was a drive through the streets, where the Indian community was waiting to catch a glimpse of him on his way to a Red Cross Indian Recreation Centre, at which Lady Louis was waiting to receive him. Mountbatten waved Nehru into the large open car that was to take him to the Centre

and got in himself, then the two of them drove side by side through the cheering crowds composed largely of former members of the Indian National Army.

When it had become known to high-ranking officers on Mountbatten's staff that he proposed to drive through the streets with Nehru, he had been bombarded with advice to do nothing so unwise, if not actually dangerous. If he were so fortunate as to escape assassination, he would at least be guilty of enhancing Nehru's prestige by lending him his own. Mountbatten, as always, listened to their arguments carefully, but decided that he was right. He believed he could lose nothing by sharing the crowd's enthusiasm and taking half the wind destined for Nehru's sails. Moreover, he considered Nehru a world figure, with a following of 40,000,000, who had no need to establish his prestige in Hindustan. On the contrary, if Nehru's prestige were affected in any way, it would be only in the minds of some of his extremist followers who might think that one who fraternized openly with representatives of the British Raj was a bit of a Quisling.

Never have I seen or heard anything quite so extraordinary as the welcome accorded Nehru and Mountbatten on that drive. The streets, packed with Indians, seemed to shake with the cries of enthusiasm which greeted them. Pushing through the crushing throng, they reached the Recreation Centre, and there, shortly after their arrival, the crowd pressed on them so eagerly that Lady Louis was knocked to the ground. Fortunately, Nehru and Mountbatten were able to rescue her before she was trampled on. After the meeting at the Centre's small wooden hut, which stood like an island in a sea of eddying Indians, the Mountbattens were able to dodge through a rear exit in their car and drive off to the accompaniment of deafening yells of delight, followed by Nehru, who was scheduled to return to Government House in another car fifteen minutes later.

No sooner had Mountbatten left than the crowd of Nehru's followers became a rabble. As he came out of the building a throng of howling, pressing Indians formed a black and squirming mass around his car. The car moved forward at a snail's pace with Nehru standing up in it, while the crowd, like an octopus with human arms, reached out to touch him. As he was snatched at, an expression of acute pain and embarrassment came over his carefully ascetic countenance. The only comment on the experience he had to offer afterwards was that he feared a regrettable faith in the attainment of sanctity by the grabbing of his ankles was becoming more prevalent amongst his following.

Two days later I saw Nehru again. I was passing in a jeep the site on which had previously stood a war memorial erected to the heroes of the "Indian National Army" who had fallen in the fight against the

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British. Standing by it was a small group of Indians who had decorated the spot with several wreaths of flowers. They were staring with a rather bashful air at the car in front of me, and their stare was being returned by the occupants of the car, who were craning their heads towards the window. Amongst them I recognized the Pandit.

Subsequently I learned that Nehru had been so surprised and delighted by the considerate and gentlemanly way in which he had been received that he decided to respond in kind. At Mountbatten's request he readily abandoned a plan to place a wreath on the Indian National Army monument, which had been a part of his original programme, when it was pointed out to him that such an act would be rather embarrassing to Mountbatten and to the men under him who had fought against the Indian National Army when they were assisting the Japanese. Apparently he did everything he could to reciprocate the attitude of conciliation with which he had been received. Later, when I met a group of Nehru's extremist followers in Bombay, they questioned me closely about his visit to Singapore, for they were very displeased at the change in his attitude since his return.

During Nehru's visit and after his departure all the officers in the Public Relations Department of headquarters went around with worried expressions. "We have been at 'panic stations' for the past month preparing speeches for Mountbatten's coming tour of Australia and New Zealand," one of the officers told me. "He has to deliver forty-four speeches in seventeen days." The Public Relations staff prepared the speeches, sent them to Government House; Mountbatten read them, tore most of them up and wrote his own. This was not as difficult as it sounds, because, as with all speakers who have to speak often, he, in essence, gave the same speech each time, the body of which was the story of the Burma campaign. It was, after all, the appropriate subject for a Supreme Allied Commander to speak on.

This tour of Australia and New Zealand was to be made by Lord and Lady Louis Mountbatten at the invitation of the Governments of the two Dominions concerned. Mountbatten was going as almost the only distinguished Allied war leader who had not had the honour of commanding Anzacs, while his wife was going as Superintendent-in-Chief of the Joint Red Cross and St. John War Organizations. She had already won the admiration of many Australians who had been prisoners of war in the various camps she had inspected in Java, Sumatra, French Indo-China, Malaya, Siam and Burma. The actual purpose of the tour was the same as that of the tour the Prince of Wales had made when Mountbatten had accompanied him twenty years before. It was a tour of goodwill, a tour to promote Empire solidarity, a flag-waving expedition to encourage the Dominions of the British Empire.

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For Mountbatten, it was to be no vacation from his duties as Supreme Allied Commander. It was making British Empire propaganda on Allied time. He took with him his Deputy Chief of Staff, Rear-Admiral C. E. Douglas Pennant; his Assistant Chief of Staff, Major-General Bryan Kimmins, and his Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, Brigadier J. S. M. Wardell. To keep in touch with his headquarters he was accompanied by his flying radio station, a C-47 christened the "Mercury", which could handle as much radio traffic as the radio room on a major warship. Whenever Mountbatten landed at a stop in his gigantic York, the "Mercury" would come in shortly after him. Immediately her antennae would be raised and a radio staff would be on duty twenty-four hours a day to handle incoming and outgoing messages, which frequently ran to 5,000 words a day. He was also accompanied on the tour by several journalists representing leading British newspapers and one American journalist—myself.

In Australia Mountbatten's itinerary included Canberra, the capital, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane; and in New Zealand, Wellington, Dunedin, Christchurch and Auckland.

~~At~~ Canberra, where they first landed, their reception was characteristically enthusiastic. Every time they appeared they were greeted by cheers, photographers, newspapermen and autograph hunters. They spent the first day they arrived resting from the journey with the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, Mountbatten's royal cousins. The next day their political programme began in earnest with a visit in the morning to Mr. Chifley, the Prime Minister, lunch with the Australian Commonwealth Cabinet, a talk in the early afternoon with the acting British High Commissioner, followed by a Press conference, and in the evening a dinner given in their honour by the Duke of Gloucester. The next morning they flew to Melbourne, where for the next two days they attended a multiplicity of functions, from a reception given for them by the Empire Society to a ball given in their honour by the Governor of Victoria. Two thousand people attended this exclusive event. The large and ornate Victorian ballroom at Government House was crowded with women in long kid gloves, their most elaborate dresses, and all their jewels. Before the Mountbattens and the Governor-General came in ~~from dinner~~ the ballroom was crowded with Australians of 100 per cent British extraction, all looking around to see who was and who wasn't there. Finally a human alley, lined on either side with the more important local lights who were to be presented to the Mountbattens, was formed down the length of the ballroom by a couple of harassed A.D.C.s. The buzz gradually grew to a din. Suddenly the orchestra struck up a tune and Mountbatten, accompanied by the wife of the Governor and followed by the Governor and Lady Louis, filed into the room behind a

low balustrade some ten feet in front of a dais on which stood a double Australian throne. After "God Save the King" had been played, the Mountbattens proceeded down the human aisle to the accompaniment of a Strauss waltz and were introduced to a bowing and curtseying Melbourne by the two anxious A.D.C.s. Then the dancing began, but after an hour the Mountbattens were still being introduced to hundreds more in the red-carpeted *salon*, where sherry and small, sweet, sugary cakes were being served with "Down Under" profusion. There was something overwhelming, even frightening, about the seriousness with which the citizens of Melbourne took the affair. For most of those present the evening was, figuratively speaking, a memory to be wrapped in satin, tied with ribbon, scented with lavender and carefully preserved. The truth is, the "Aussies" went all out for the Mountbattens.

The reception in Sydney was no less enthusiastic. As in Melbourne, every time Lord and Lady Louis left a building they were surrounded by hundreds of people waiting to catch a glimpse of them. The newspapers reflected their enthusiasm. I remember one day they were described by a banner in heavy type, "He's a Beaut and She's Even More of a Beaut." In another paper a life-story of Mountbatten was printed in which it was said, "Australia Welcomes Mountbatten—Prince, Playboy, and Paradox." Even his staff did not escape the spotlight of enthusiastic publicity. For example, the pilot of his York, Wing-Commander Jack Mathews, was toasted extensively as "The Sheik of the Week" in Melbourne.

While the Supreme Commander was in Sydney he skilfully solved a labour problem which had been presenting difficulties both to him and to his Command. It had arisen from the refusal of the dock workers to load ships bound for South-East Asia as a protest against what they unimperially described as the "murder" by British troops of Indonesians seeking their independence from the tyranny of the Dutch. The supplies that were being held up were, of course, not arms which came from England or American Lend-Lease, but Red Cross supplies, including both food and medical supplies. Mountbatten informed the dock workers one afternoon that by their actions they were not annoying the Dutch so much as starving the Malaysians and British, for obviously the white women and children in the prison camps in Java had to be fed, and this meant that relief ships bound for Penang had to be diverted ~~so~~ to keep alive the liberated women and children in Java. This and other clever arguments so impressed the labour leaders that they immediately rescinded the strike order and the dock hands began loading the ships the next day.

The comments of Australian labour leaders showed how deeply Mountbatten had impressed them. One said, "That man is not leader just because he has a lot of gold braid on his sleeve, medals on his chest, or because he has a title. He does it by sheer brain power." In reference



to the rumour circulating at the time that Mountbatten was going to be the next Governor-General of Australia, another said: "If they make that man Governor-General here they will be throwing a great brain on the scrap-heap." Considering that he never walked in on a more hostile audience, the change in the opinions he effected was nothing short of sensational.

In New Zealand the Mountbattens were met in a spirit quite different from that they had experienced in Australia. There much ceremony had surrounded every event, but in New Zealand there was little of it, only a remarkable grace in the arrangement of all the official functions. In the reception given them in New Zealand there was something of the simplicity of welcome, untinged by subservience, accorded by a Scottish gillie to his laird. New Zealand was not a trades union paradise. Here was a land of hardworking farmers who had left England in the last century, when they could no longer make a living from agriculture, to find another land where they could. Australia, on the other hand, seems to be a country populated with vital and well-meaning people with quite different interests. In Australia a woman remarked of the Mountbattens, "They are the sort of people England and the Empire can be proud of." In New Zealand somebody exclaimed, "Wouldn't they make good New Zealanders!"

During the tour they were both bombarded with letters and presents. The letters included every kind of matter from frank praise to suggestions of ways to make atomic bombs, while the presents ranged from freshly cut flowers to freshly caught trout. The boxes of chocolates which were sent to Lady Louis were usually confiscated by her husband with the remark, "I had better eat these, you know you are getting far too fat," though in fact she was as thin as ever and he was beginning to be conscious of his waistline.

The tour was a brilliant success. Dominion loyalty was cemented "Down Under". The Antipodes were safely British and Mountbatten came back to Singapore thoroughly exhausted. His wife joined him two weeks later, for, as it was her duty to visit as many hospitals and Red Cross and St. John establishments as possible, her itinerary was somewhat more extended than his.

As a material consequence of Mountbatten's altered responsibilities in the theatre and the gradual return of conditions to normal, he no longer lived in Government House but in Flagstaff House, a smaller residence, which for his three-week residence there was totally remodelled and redecorated. While he was away, Malaya had reverted to civil government under Sir Edward Gent, who still had a hard task before him even though the situation had much improved since September, both politically and economically. The colony of Singapore was also

again under civil administration. Mountbatten's Chief Political Adviser, Mr. M. E. Denning, had been replaced by Lord Killearn, who held the post of Special Commissioner and acted as Chief Foreign Office Adviser to Mountbatten.

In French Indo-China the atmosphere had more or less cleared with the Chinese evacuation of the northern part of the country, while in the south the French Government and the Viet Minh were reaching a transitory understanding. At the same time the ever-increasing numbers of French troops, arriving every day, were fast stamping out outbursts of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* among the Annamites. Mountbatten no longer had any responsibilities in this area, for the French had entirely relieved the British of control and the few Japanese remaining there were concentrated and waiting for repatriation. French Indo-China was now safe for bureaucrats and profiteers.

Siam had as usual not fulfilled her promises to supply rice, but this default was now the responsibility of Lord Killearn, whose special business was the co-ordination of food distribution. Mountbatten had turned Burma over to the civil authorities in October, and since that time conditions there, politically speaking, had deteriorated. His guiding principles of decency were no longer esteemed. Instead of being united under the banner of the Anti-Fascist Peoples' Freedom League, the Burmese parties had been split into principal factions, some still under Aung San, who was now in opposition, and some, who had accepted jobs in the executive council, representing the more conservative elements of the Burma liberation movement. Although Aung San and his followers were not content with the traditional rate at which the British Government was fulfilling its promises of Dominion status, they were sufficiently convinced of the futility of violence to resign themselves, if somewhat unwillingly, to waiting as long as necessary for Britain to keep her word. But Burma, too, was no longer Mountbatten's responsibility.

Official British approval of Mountbatten's liberal policy was confirmed in October 1946 when Sir Hubert Rance (who, as Major-General Rance, Chief of Civil Affairs in Burma under Mountbatten's Military Governorship, had carried out his policies) returned to Burma as Civil Governor, exactly a year after the Military Governor had been relieved, and just one year after the country had reverted to civilian control.

The situation in the Netherlands East Indies had reached a stalemate and looked as if it were going to remain so for some time. The Indonesian leaders had conceded, and so had the Dutch, but both sides were still far from agreement, and the Dutch in Holland, having been liberated from the Germans, were increasingly reluctant to liberate Java. Here, too, with the withdrawal of most of the Dutch internees except the 15,000 who were still being held hostages by the Indonesians, Mountbatten's

responsibilities were fast waning. Moreover, most of the Japanese troops had been disarmed and concentrated. Both the Indonesian Premier, Sjahrir, and the Dutch Lieutenant-Governor, Van Mook, bestowed great and unsolicited praise on the British forces upon their withdrawal—praise which suggested that both were glad to see the troublesome peacemakers go.

Mountbatten had believed that the process of repatriating the three-quarters of a million Japanese would be very slow considering the amount of shipping at his disposal, but his requests to General MacArthur for additional transports had been granted and it looked as if his task would be done far sooner than he had originally supposed. In any case ninety-nine per cent of the Japanese in his area were under control and his responsibility for them was almost over, for they were concentrated in areas suitable for their evacuation as soon as there was sufficient shipping available. It could therefore be said that the better part of the directive given Mountbatten at Potsdam had been carried out.

The nature of the situation in the Orient had changed greatly since Japan had capitulated nine months before. The Western Powers, even the colonial imperialists, now realized that native states must have at least a modicum of political autonomy, so now the question had become how much autonomy could be given them. India's claim to independence had been recognized, but her first National Government had still to assume the responsibilities with which it was charged. Burma was well on her way to Dominion status provided the Burmese could avoid a civil war. Malaya, too, was shortly to have self-determination, but the reconciliation of various sultans, of independent and semi-independent states, to any proposed way of attaining it was a slow process. As for French Indo-China and the Netherlands East Indies, the claims to autonomy of nationalist movements within these countries had been clearly established, but the terms under which any real autonomy was to be granted had not yet been defined to the satisfaction of the Colonial Offices involved. Men were beginning to understand the true wisdom of British moderation and the policy of silence and slow time.

As long as the fight was on, as long as blood was being spilled in the name of liberty, there was in these countries but one front, and that was the recognition front. Now that recognition had been granted, the elements which had fought together had begun to fight among themselves. In India, Moslem was fighting Hindu. In China, the Communists were fighting the Kuomintang. In French Indo-China, the Vietnam, now recognized, was trying to establish its authority over Cochin-China. In Burma, few signs of rehabilitation were to be seen after a year of British effort and it looked as if the Burmese were to be given an economic desert for their freedom to grow in. In the Netherlands East Indies the

situation was still unsettled. While the conservative elements of the Indonesian Nationalist Party were satisfied with the terms granted them by the Dutch authorities, the radicals were not. Besides, some of the outer islands of the chain were not prepared to submit to the supremacy of Java or her Indonesian leaders. The only solvents, capable of reducing harsh and mutually repellent elements of discontent to a fluid way of life in these evolving Asiatic states, were responsibility and trade, prosperity and years. The Asiatics had learned how to fight for freedom; now they must learn how to use it.

After a trip to Nepal to receive the kingdom's highest decoration, the Star of Nepal, awarded him because of the fact that a brigade of the Nepalese Army had fought under him in Burma, Mountbatten returned to Singapore to wind up his affairs and depart for London to attend the Victory Parade (and also to discuss the Imperial troop movements that might be made necessary by the threatening Indian revolution). Breaking his journey in New Delhi, he went to see the Viceroy and General Auchinleck. When he left, his duties as Supreme Commander were taken over by Lieut.-General Sir Montague Stopford. He had completed his task in Asia more successfully perhaps than any Englishman since Warren Hastings had polished off one of similar magnitude.

In the complex task of playing international policeman, rounding up three-quarters of a million armed Japanese, feeding millions of starving natives, evacuating many thousands of Allied prisoners of war and internees, quelling rebellion and robbery on all sides, re-establishing colonial economic dominion and restoring the white man's prestige, Mountbatten used all his talents as a statesman. In the case of the Netherlands East Indies, he prevented the Dutch from trying to regain their justly forfeited colonial empire by the force of a slaughter which would have ended in the extermination of every white man in the area. By mediation and moderation he kept the military lid on the situation until he could win the Dutch authorities to his view that they should negotiate with the Indonesian leaders and reach some sort of compromise, thereby trading a merely formal position for political privileges and substantial natural advantages. For the first time in history he forced the Dutch to abandon their traditional policy, according to Canning, of "giving too little and asking too much". In French Indo-China his prompt seizure of Saigon prevented the Chinese from swarming over the whole country. If they had been permitted to advance it is safe to say they would still be there.

But his best display was the skill with which he prevented what might have been a chaotic situation from developing in Burma. Had it not been for him, Aung San and his Burma National Army would very likely have been contemptuously turned away when they offered their

a civil war or a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations? Did the future hold for India peace and prosperity or strife and starvation?

Over one hundred years before Lord Macaulay had said that whenever the day came on which India achieved self-government along democratic lines, "It will be the proudest day in English history." It was then Mountbatten's responsibility to see that the day Britain quit India was her proudest and not a disastrous admission of defeat. From his point of view, his assignment as last Viceroy of India was a particularly unpleasant one, not only because it looked very much as if the Indian situation was insoluble, but because the one ambition of Mountbatten's life had always been to be a great naval officer and eventually to become First Sea Lord of the Admiralty.

In June 1946, after he had finished his tenure as Supreme Allied Commander, and eight months before his appointment as Viceroy, he returned to London for a short period of leave before he was given his next naval assignment. During the summer months, Mountbatten's time was fully occupied in preparing his dispatches, delivering lectures and receiving honours and decorations. He was presented with the Sword of Honour and the Honorary Freedom of the City of London; he was appointed High Steward and First Freeman of the Borough of Romsey, the town near his wife's estate, "Broadlands"; he was made an Elder Brother of Trinity House; he received honorary degrees both from Cambridge and Oxford; he was appointed President of the Royal Automobile Club and the British Institute of Radio Engineers.

The two greatest recognitions of his services, however, were made when the King created him Viscount Mountbatten of Burma and a Knight of the Garter, honours which he shared with those two great British field commanders, Alexander and Montgomery.

It was no secret that Mountbatten had been offered a peerage on the previous New Years' Honours List, but he had asked the King to hold the question in abeyance until he had wound up his job in South-East Asia. At the time he felt very strongly that, although the war was officially over, conditions of war still prevailed in many areas under his command. Bitter fighting was still in progress in the Netherlands East Indies and French Indo-China. Moreover, political controversy was then raging all round the world over the rights of the so-called "Imperial Aggressors" in the Orient. In any case, he had as good a title as any man could want, although it was only a courtesy title given him as the younger brother of a marquess. He had a strange fixation about discarding his name Lord Louis, by which he has always been known by the men under his command. He accepted, finally, the Viscounty that had been offered him rather more as a tribute to the importance of the contribution

made by the men serving under him than because he wanted it. But he is still "Lord Louis" to the people of England.

During that whole summer and, indeed, ever since it became general knowledge that he was leaving his post as Supreme Commander, there had been much speculation in official circles as to what his next appointment would be. When I was in Australia, it was common talk that the people of the Commonwealth wanted Mountbatten to be their next Governor-General after the Duke of Gloucester. Not only did this appear in most of the newspapers, but even members of the Government referred to it in their speeches at official lunches and receptions.

In Burma there was similar talk that Mountbatten would relieve Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, and even on the little island of Malta rumour was rife that he was going to be next Governor-General. His name was suggested in more than one quarter as next British Ambassador to Washington. In fact, his name was mentioned in connection with almost every high post in the Empire except that of Viceroy. These rumours were in no way allayed by the fact that in private conversation, just as in public statement, he frequently averred that his post-war plan was to return to his peace-time occupation, that of being a sailor.

There were considerations behind his determination to return to the Navy other than the mere desire to continue with his professional career. He knew he would be in a position to be uniquely valuable to the armed forces. Only five men served as Supreme Allied Commander in this war—Eisenhower, MacArthur, Alexander, Wilson and Mountbatten. Of the three British Supreme Commanders, Mountbatten served longer than any other two put together. When to this fact is added that he was an associate of the Chief of Staff Committee for eighteen months (a privilege shared by no other Supreme Allied Commander), it becomes obvious that his experience of the higher direction of war is unique.

The military value of this would be unusual whatever his age, but, when one realizes that at the time of writing he is only forty-seven (that is, between ten and twenty years younger than his fellow-Supremos), it becomes apparent that he is the only leader, British or American, of the last war who can be considered available to serve in a similar capacity should an emergency arise within the next twenty years.

All the war-time Chiefs of Staff, and all except one of his brother Supreme Commanders, have now retired from active service in the armed forces. Experience in the higher direction of a great war can be acquired only in a great war, and it will be impossible for others, however highly they may be endowed and qualified, to equal Mountbatten's until another war presents the opportunity. If Mountbatten were to accept any political post he would, in the course of a few years at most, have

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lost touch with military affairs and not be sufficiently up-to-date to be considered for high military command.

So it was that, on January 6, 1947, Mountbatten returned to the Navy as Rear-Admiral, having shed two war-time stripes to take up his appointment to the Senior Officers' Technical Course at Portsmouth in preparation for hoisting his flag with the First Mediterranean Cruiser Squadron in April. It is customary for senior officers to take this course before returning to an appointment at sea in order to brush up on the latest technical developments. Nothing could have suited Mountbatten better than to find himself back in the Navy learning about the latest complexities in radar and cruiser fire control. His instructors, though, did not find very much to teach the former Supremo. On one occasion, when an instructor confessed himself unable to answer a question on some new development in radar-assisted navigation, Mountbatten rose to his feet and, somewhat apologetically, explained with a wealth of technical detail the operation of this new device.

Suddenly, after completing half his course, he received an urgent summons to London. The next the world heard was an announcement, made by Prime Minister Attlee on February 20 from the cold and ornate Chamber of the House of Commons, that Field-Marshal Lord Wavell would be replaced as Viceroy of India by Admiral Viscount Mountbatten. In his statement to the House, the Prime Minister said:

"His Majesty's Government wishes to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power into responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948."

In the thunderstruck silence which followed this remark Attlee went on to make it quite clear that the British Government itself did not anticipate a smooth passage for Mountbatten in his new position as there was not yet any definite prospect that the Indians would settle their differences before June of the next year.

Here the British had most un-Britishly committed themselves. The British were going to pull out, whether the Indians had managed to agree or not. Moreover, they had chosen to do so quite frankly and by so doing had passed the buck to the Indians themselves. From now on it was up to them to come to some agreement on their government if they could, but, if they could not, the British were not going to stay and hold the ring for them any longer. Britain was not going to use her military strength to crush the Muslim League nor yet to protect it, nor was she going to use her strength to coerce the Punjab or Assam into accepting a Hindu Constitution.

This new departure in British foreign policy was vehemently attacked by Churchill, as leader of the Opposition, when it was announced in the Commons. Amid cries of "Scuttle!" Churchill called on Mr. Attlee seven times to explain why he was recalling Lord Wavell, who had been sent to India by Churchill during the war to carry out the policy which had been followed up to then. "Surely," shouted Churchill, above the growing clamour, "the right honourable gentleman did not wake up one morning and say, 'Oh, let us get a new Viceroy!' There must have been some reason or purpose behind it?" Mr. Attlee retorted icily that Churchill, when he was Prime Minister, had made plenty of changes in high appointments, but he was not aware that Churchill had ever explained his reason for doing so.

Nevertheless, the reasons for the change seemed pretty clear. With the announcement of a firm time for departure, a quite new element entered into Indo-British politics. If Britain was going to get any future economic advantage out of her historic connection with India, she must do so on the grounds of goodwill; and Lord Wavell, however great his military and literary qualifications, was not the man to promote warm feelings towards Britain in the hearts of the Indians. It is difficult to believe, in any case, that Mountbatten would have accepted so thankless a job if it had been merely a question of carrying on in the same old "muddle-through" way, perhaps indefinitely. He remains on the Active List of the Royal Navy, with the expressed wish that his future career in the Service shall not be prejudiced. He cannot, however, afford to stay out of the Navy very long if he is going to pursue his life-long career, which is what he says he really wants to do. On the other hand, it is doubtful, after being Supreme Allied Commander and Viceroy, whether he will ever be safe from being pulled out when a high-powered and razzle-dazzle job needs doing.

Mountbatten has now been given the job of stamping "Paid" on nearly two centuries of British rule in India with all its ups and downs, its Kiplings and its Kitcheners. Future relations between Britain and India depended wholly on the way in which he handled the transfer of authority. He had been given a tremendous responsibility of ensuring that whatever riots and communal disorders took place—and there were many before and after the British pull out (or to use the word of His Majesty's Opposition, "Scuttle")—a country of some 400,000,000 should look to the British, after they have gone, as friends and not oppressors.

India has elected to stay within the British Commonwealth as a Dominion. It was at one time thought possible that a formula would have been discovered to cover such an arrangement rather like the one that applies to Ireland—something in a sense illogical but of great practical convenience to all concerned. In view of his great success, the fact that



Indians have elected to become Britain's newest Dominion is, without doubt, one of the fruits of the Mountbatten policy in India.

At the time of his appointment there were many strong and divergent opinions as to whether Mountbatten was or was not the right man for the job as last British Viceroy. The Conservatives seized the announcement of his appointment and Attlee's statement of policy in India as a glorious opportunity to attack the Labour Government, although the Prime Minister's decision has been the logical conclusion to British policy in India since the time of the Montagu-Chelmsford report. Yet they spoke of Mountbatten very much as those stiff French aristocrats must have spoken of Philippe Egalité at the time of the French Revolution. The gibe went around the Conservative clubs that he had been appointed last Viceroy because he had done such a good job of "selling out" to Aung San in Burma. Whether the job he did as last Viceroy will ever be open to criticism of a more realistic sort it is still too early to say. For the Indian, at least, Mountbatten in his present rôle is the palpable personification of British power today. With a respect or contempt for his personal character will go an esteem for or a condemnation of the Commonwealth he represents. Although it is impossible at this time to say what the reaction of the Indians as a nation—or as several nations—will be to him, it might not be entirely valueless to attempt to delineate the character of the last Viceroy, at least as I have come to know it from my own personal observation and from what I have been told by many of his friends and associates.

Were you to see Mountbatten give a speech you would be deeply impressed by his presence, his fine delivery, his direct manner and his lack of loftiness. Paradoxically, were you to spend a couple of days with him in more informal circumstances you would, probably go away feeling that you had consorted with an invention of Lewis Carroll's fertile fancy. As a way of introducing to you some of the conflicting complexities of his character, imagine yourself, if you will, his ~~guest~~ guest for a week-end at his country estate. You arrive late in the afternoon to have Mountbatten greet you effusively at the doorstep. Before dinner he offers you a cocktail, though he himself would probably have a lemon squash or some other soft drink. During cocktails, and subsequently during dinner, he carries on a most interesting monologue directed with considerable care into channels which might interest you. You notice at dinner, as at the following meals, that the food is both simple and orthodox, of the variety known as "good home cooking", for Mountbatten had his palate educated in the Navy and has always retained his predilection for such things as roast lamb and boiled potatoes. After dinner, over port and cigars, a package might arrive by special messenger. It contains possibly some new type of gun-sight in

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which your host is interested. With a fine show of zest he examines it and explains to you how it works. This explanation you might find a little difficult to follow because of Mountbatten's tendency to illustrate his meaning with the most elaborate of comparisons. While you are wildly trying to follow his effort to elucidate how the second beam of light is deflected from the mirror at an angle of thirty-seven degrees, he might attempt to "simplify" it for you by telling you to "imagine three oranges" or something equally *outré*, until you had totally forgotten where the light was supposed to go and what on earth was the purpose of the mirror. The explanation comes to a halt with the arrival of more guests, for Mountbatten is having a private showing of a currently popular film. Even if the movie is rather a poor one, you find your host thoroughly enjoying himself.

Instead of going to bed after bidding you good night, Mountbatten retires to his study, where you might find him working into the early hours of the morning on some project in which he is currently involved.

The next morning you join him in an early canter over the fields, arriving at breakfast an hour later already somewhat exhausted—due partially to your host's spirited discourses on horsemanship, relative merits of bridle paths, coupled with a detailed description of how the park could be improved by replanting half the trees. After your breakfast you are left to your own devices while your host dictates a few letters. This gives you a chance to browse through his library and play any record which happens to take your fancy. You discover that the contents of this library range from P. G. Wodehouse, Edgar Wallace, and Winston Churchill all the way up to more advanced text-books on highly recondite scientific subjects. The tables you find covered with a broad assortment of magazines, mostly illustrated, and the record-racks containing comprehensive collections of the works of the more sophisticated exponents of modern rhythm, namely Jack Buchanan and Noel Coward. Your inspection is here interrupted by the sound of running feet. Through the open library door you catch a brief glimpse of a Siamese cat masquerading as a streak of lightning with a whooping Mountbatten hotly in pursuit. A few minutes later you would again find him dictating to his secretary. If you should care to eavesdrop, you might be amazed to discover the total absence of that lucidity and felicity of phrase which characterize his public discourse. In dictating he stammers, repeats himself, hesitates.

At noon your host joins you again, and announces that as the day is so fine, it might be pleasant to go for a picnic and have you any suggestions as to where you would like to go?

The next half-hour is fraught with incident. Mountbatten calls in his secretary and begins dictating a plan of how you are to spend the

afternoon. This plan calls for a drive to a spot twenty miles away where one can eat lunch in pleasant surroundings. After lunch you go to a naval station eight miles further on because he wants to see some improvements that have recently been effected. Next he thinks it might be nice to stop at the Yacht Club near by to examine a new speedboat which has been designed by a friend of his. After this he adds tea with Colonel and Mrs. Crichton and, on the way home, three or four more calls on various matters of interest. No sooner has the secretary finished taking down notes on who she is supposed to 'phone to expect you, than Mountbatten decides on another plan. And after this, a third. Here he remembers suddenly he has a map of the countryside which would be a great help in assessing more accurately how long it will take to get from place to place. Where is it? He remembers giving it the day before to his secretary, who denies ever having seen it. But yes, he is absolutely convinced he had given her the map at approximately three o'clock the previous afternoon in that very same room. The secretary again pleads not having seen it. This launches the whole household—secretaries, valet, footman, chambermaid and casual spectators—into a furious search for the missing map. It is finally run to earth in the drawer beside Mountbatten's bed, where it had been left three weeks before. This obstacle overcome, there is more planning, which finally causes the secretary to burst into tears. Overwork. She needs a vacation, which she hasn't had since he returned to England. Mountbatten immediately feels ashamed of himself. He is understanding and conciliatory. Is a week going to be enough? Good. Take the Bentley and go wherever you like.

This settled, you climb into the Rolls coupé with Mountbatten. He drives fast and well but has the disconcerting habit of looking at things that interest him, taking his eyes off the road for what seems to be appallingly long periods. Before arriving at the spot appointed for lunch Mountbatten makes three stops at different places, suddenly remembering something important he has to attend to. These delays make you run so far behind schedule that you have to bolt your lunch in a little under five minutes. During the meal he says he must reduce because he is gaining too much weight. With this he takes another sandwich and adjures you to stop eating or you will end up fatter than he is! The remainder of the afternoon is divided between more Mountbatten investigating and instructive asides to you, all on the double. At the naval installation he spends half his time telling you why naval barracks are built in that peculiar way and the other half making pertinent suggestions to the officer in charge on how the installation could be more efficiently run. He behaves in a like manner at the Yacht Club, where his time is again divided between telling the owner of new devices and developments which would improve the boat's performance. He

apparently wants to give everything with which he comes in contact the well-known "Mountbatten touch".

You finally arrive back after dark. Mountbatten is still full of enthusiasm and gusto, while you are distinctly wilted. Shortly after your return a servant comes up to him and inquires whether it will be convenient for him to see the plumber the next day at ten-thirty about installing a new hot-water boiler. "God's teeth!" is the response. "Why must I see the plumber? Must I attend to everything?"

"But you specifically asked to see the plumber, my lord."

"Everybody knows at ten-thirty every day I work on my correspondence! Is there no efficiency, no organization in this house?" He shouts these last words as he dashes up the stairs three at a time. Back down the stairs comes the crash as he slams the door to his room. Fifteen minutes later the squall has blown over and he is downstairs again talking to you as if nothing had happened. The next day he sees the plumber, devotes an hour to studying the methods used for the heating of water and makes numerous suggestions for their improvement. But you are no longer there to be edified by this discourse, as you left on the night train after dinner, deeply puzzled by the curious character of your host.

By this imaginary account I have attempted to convey an impression of some of the obvious flaws in Mountbatten's personality. If, however, he possesses the weaknesses inherent in every human being, he possesses the force, determination, and vision to be found in very few. His sense of duty, sense of showmanship, liberalism and his remarkable powers of imagination, are the characteristics which have raised him from a naval officer to the position of Viceroy of India.

In the first place, there can be no doubt that his being born of royal parents was a very great asset, not because he was born royal but because he was born to responsibility. It is incontrovertibly of no particular advantage to be born a prince in this 20th century; indeed, when Churchill proposed to the Chiefs of Staff that Mountbatten be made Advisor, Combined Operations, he suggested as the only factor which mitigated against his appointment was his royal blood. Nevertheless, it is an advantage to have been teathed on the lesson, not that the world owes you a living, but that you must be prepared to accept the responsibility which the authority of your birth has thrust upon you. Dickie was educated as a child to the belief that he must lead by example, by a consistent show of superior ability. The reputations of his father and elder brother were held up to him as a constant reminder of the family tradition of superior accomplishment. Therefore, he began his training for bearing aloft the family standard with honour as a cadet at Osborne, where he received very bad marks during his first term. Although he

was not punished, his parents undoubtedly made it clear that this was not what was expected of him. To a sensitive and imaginative child of thirteen this must have been vaguely humiliating, rather like a Barrymore appearing on the stage for the first time and forgetting his lines. This event was followed by the outbreak of the First World War, and then by the resignation of his father as First Sea Lord. These two events, coming as they did close together at a period when a child is most impressionable, crystallized what before had been a desire for accomplishment into an iron determination to excel. He came to realize early that he did not inherit that facile ability which had made success such an effortless matter for his father and elder brother. As he once explained to Brigadier Michael Wardell: "Any success I may have will come wholly as a result of a laborious slogging method." Then he went on: "Now Georgie [his brother] was quite different. Georgie was really a genius. He could lie on his back in the ward-room, talk and laugh on a hundred topics, and then—looking at his watch—dictate a draft for the Fleet Gunnery Orders which, without correction or revision, would not only be issued but kept afterwards as an example of lucidity! The only trouble with that sort of a brain is that, if you have it, it is so hard to make yourself work. I haven't, I'm really a mutt. I've to work." During the First World War he took this belief very much to heart. In fact, he used to be considered something of a curiosity by his brother midshipmen because of the laborious care he took over the performance of his duties. Although he could be as high-spirited and playful as any of them on occasion, the pursuit of pleasure would never draw him away until he had completed his work to his own satisfaction.

Later, after he was married, the international set in which his wife moved thought him to be something of an eccentric. They could not conceive how a man of such remarkable good looks and royal birth, married to a woman of great wealth and beauty, could be content to eschew party-going, drinking, and being idle—all for the sake of getting first in courses on wireless telegraphy, writing text-books and dictionaries and the grinding performance of his duties as a naval officer! Clearly the man must be daft!

Mountbatten's brother officers did not think him as much of a joke, or as great an eccentric, as did his wife's friends. The average officer in the Royal Navy, like the average man in any profession, does not spend every hour he is not asleep planning and working to succeed. And he does not particularly admire people who do. He was obviously an opportunist—a man who was ruthless in the pursuit of his goal. Opportunism is not one of the more endearing characteristics; at least it is safe to say that his brother officers did not find it so. One cannot feel an unreserved liking for a man who, no matter how genial

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he may be, seems to approach you with a how-can-you-benefit-me attitude.

This characteristic of his was largely the result of that conviction of leadership inculcated in him as a child. This caused him to believe, and believe sincerely, that whatever he was doing was of enormous importance. When he was communications officer he was convinced that communications was the most important branch of the Navy, and he promptly set about to convince everybody else that he was right. No pains were spared to increase the status of his branch. To this end he used all his family connections and influence. Later, as a destroyer commander, he was equally convinced that destroyers were the most important ships in the Navy, and, moreover, that his ship and his crew were the best in the Fleet. He was not slow in imbuing his ship's company with the same conviction. When he served as Chief of Combined Operations he tackled the job as if the success or failure of the Allied war effort depended on his branch of the Service, and his branch alone.

The conviction of the high value of any project in which he, personally, is engaged is not limited to his commands, but includes projects which would be considered beneath the interest of many people in a similar position. For instance, during that period of the war when His Majesty's Navy was suffering her greatest casualties, Noel Coward approached Mountbatten with his idea for doing a film depicting the courage and sacrifice of the Royal Navy, to be entitled "In Which We Serve". Mountbatten immediately recognized the morale-building value of such an enterprise and pledged Coward all the help he could give. Coward ran against a solid wall of opposition in trying to get the loan of a quantity of metal sheeting for the construction of a model destroyer in his studios. The situation was far too acute at that time, he was told, for the sheeting to be loaned for any project which did not have a direct connection with the war effort. In desperation he turned finally to Mountbatten for help. Upon hearing what the difficulty was, Lord Louis immediately went to see the First Sea Lord, Sir Dudley Pound. He did not have an appointment, but he told Pound's secretary that his business was both urgent and vital. Mountbatten explained the matter to Sir Dudley, emphasizing the value of the film from the viewpoint of morale, and managed to enlist his aid in getting the steel Coward wanted. Subsequently, on several other occasions, it was necessary for Mountbatten to intercede with Pound on Coward's behalf.

Certainly there are few men who have sufficient self-assurance and conviction of purpose to take up the time of a man, who had the responsibility of the whole Navy at one of the most critical moments in its history, with a project which could have so readily been termed frivolous. To Mountbatten, however, any project he is convinced is

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worth while is worth backing with all the force of his personality and position because he believes it is his duty to do so.

Curiously enough, the difference between Mountbatten and most of the men who play, or have played, an important part in world history is that, while their faith is usually in some ideal which they are striving to attain, his is in himself and what he is doing at the moment. Ford became a multi-millionaire because he believed in a mass-produced, low-priced car. Bismarck became Chancellor of Germany because he believed in a united and strong Germany. Washington became the first President of the United States because he believed in the importance of the United States having a responsible central government. Their success was not the result of their belief in personal achievement, but in a conviction of purpose. Such men, believing in something bigger than themselves, had the humility which is the essential element of such a belief. But Mountbatten has another belief, another type of greatness, a belief and a greatness he has in common with the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It is the absolute belief in oneself as a leader. The fanatic, or even the benefactor, who believes solely in an idea doesn't give a damn how people react to him personally, so long as their opinion does not hamper his project. The man who believes in himself is faced with the necessity of continually gaining converts who are prepared to follow him. With Roosevelt the need for followers took the form of trying to win the liking and respect of everyone with whom he came in contact. Whether it might be the chauffeur of his car, or the representative of a foreign power, he worked equally hard at trying to get another convert to the Roosevelt faith. Mountbatten is much the same. He has developed his royal inheritance of tact and charm to a remarkable degree. Whether it is making a speech to a handful of despondent troops, or talking with an ambassador, he is equally able to say that which will please and impress his audience.

Although he was fortunate enough to begin with the natural advantage of a pleasing manner and a handsome appearance, he has worked really hard at developing his talents. Despite the disadvantage of a bad memory, in the sense of forgetting where he leaves personal articles, he has developed his mechanical memory to a remarkable degree. For instance, he can remember and associate names and faces—a stock-in-trade of the American politician which is always an effective form of pleasing. On one occasion this ability caused considerable surprise and consternation. It was at an investiture of the 5th Indian Division at Imphal, where, among the eighty-five Indian soldiers to be decorated, he recognized number seventy-five, and said to him, "Weren't you decorated in New Delhi by the Viceroy yesterday?" The Indian and the officers present were covered with confusion. Later the officer in charge explained that,

as his regiment had not been present at the other investiture and as he thought the Indian would like to receive his decoration with the rest of his regiment, he had thought it would do no harm to have it pinned on twice.

For the same reason he has developed a marked talent as a public speaker. When he first began to speak in public he used to intersperse his remarks with jokes, and was apt to be rhetorical rather than direct. He realized early, however, that it was a bad plan deliberately to introduce anecdotes where they were not clearly related to what he was saying, and an equally bad plan not to address his audience in the same manner used in addressing an individual.

On the occasion of his receiving the Freedom of the City of London, I saw and heard him run through all his paces. Three speeches had to be delivered in quick succession. The first, by tradition long, solemn, the expression of blimpish sentiments appropriate to the dignity of the occasion, was delivered in the historic Guildhall at the conclusion of endless mediaeval formalities and following a long adulatory appraisal by the Lord Mayor of the virtues of the recipient of the "freedom". The party then left the Guildhall and drove to the Mansion House, where a second speech was delivered from the balcony to the crowd gathered in the streets below. This had to be attuned more democratically to the ear of the man-in-the-street. The third was made within the Mansion House itself, and was more informal, since a little light relief was in order when addressing a company which had just eaten a good lunch and drunk champagne.

Mountbatten appeared to have decided he was too young to deliver a platitudinous oration filled with lip service to Peace, Democracy, and the Christian Spirit, and that anything interesting he might have to say must have to do with the South-East Asia Command, on whose behalf he was accepting the honour. At the Guildhall, therefore, he gave an account of the hardships suffered by his troops during the Burma campaign and of their ultimate achievements, an improved version of a speech he had given hundreds of times before.

On the balcony of the Mansion House he told the crowd in the streets below that "If any of my friends from South-East Asia are among you, I want you to know that I think you ought to be up here with me." Did Mountbatten get this idea from the remarks made by Eisenhower on a like occasion, when he said, "I shouldn't be up here; I should be down there looking up at all of you"?

The opening of his after-luncheon speech in the Mansion House provided a good example of his ability to seize on some incident and make impromptu use of it with great effect. He began by saying, in a voice as serious as that which he had employed at the Guildhall: "I told



you at the Guildhall how deeply appreciative I was of the great honour which has been paid to me today. I did not know then," he continued, "that a further and most unexpected honour had been reserved for me, the honour of driving through the City of London in company with Field Marshal Alexander and Field Marshal Montgomery." Bewildered applause.

"You may not believe that I did this just now, but I can assure you it is a fact. When I was waiting for the State landau to leave the Guildhall, I asked the coachman (since I am very interested in horses) what his two horses were called. 'They are called Monty and Alex,' he told me." Nervous laughter.

"I am afraid I rejoined with rather a poor joke," he went on, "and asked the coachman whether he also had a horse called Mountbatten. 'Oh yes, I have,' he replied, 'but he is in the stable as he is not yet old enough to go to big functions.'" Roars of laughter.

Later Mountbatten spoke of his talk with the coachman and the subsequent use he made of it. "Why, it was a gift from heaven!" he exclaimed. "It was enough to make one believe in prayer!"

Mountbatten learns his speeches by heart, or very nearly so, at any rate to the extent of knowing so well what he is to say that the alteration of a word here or there will make very little difference. In South-East Asia he not only learned by heart several different speeches, but also a series of questions and answers when speaking in languages he did not understand, such as Chinese, Burmese, Tamil, Urdu, and East and West African, so that he could address the troops of various nationalities under his command in their own tongue. When in Singapore he decorated all the guerilla leaders who had fought the Japanese during the occupation. After the presentation ceremony they were invited to Government House, where he gave them cocktails and circulated among them. For such occasions he learned a few phrases in Chinese so as to be able to make appropriate remarks to each man as he was decorated. The guerilla leaders, most of whom were Chinese Communists, must have been fairly astonished at being officially decorated and thanked, let alone being invited to Government House for cocktails. At any rate, they were delighted at being addressed in a reasonable facsimile of their own language. The air was cleared and the faint odour of mistrust with which the proceedings had opened was entirely dissipated.

Mountbatten has also been remarkably successful in winning a favourable response from the fourth estate. His policy towards newspapermen has always been to treat them with consideration and trust. Once he had just twenty-four hours in Washington, after the Quebec Conference, and was leaving for England at three in the afternoon of the day following his arrival. Every minute of his time was taken up with

official duties. On the morning before his departure his secretary informed him that *Life* was anxious to do a three-page spread on him. "Delay my departure until four. I shall give them an hour," was the response.

Eric Severiad tells of an occasion when he and one other war correspondent were awaiting Mountbatten's arrival late one night on an airfield in China. As Lord Louis and his party were about to drive off the field he saw the two correspondents, stopped the jeep in which he was riding, jumped out and came over to give them an interview so that they should not be disappointed at having come all the way out to the airfield for nothing.

So far as censorship in his various commands has been concerned, his policy was always to tell the newspapers as much as possible, an attitude very different from that of most high-ranking officers. On the whole, the Press has repaid Mountbatten's attitude of co-operation with write-ups portraying him as a glamorous, swash-buckling daredevil, a favourable if somewhat distorted picture.

He has one marked flaw in his public method. Although it is a flaw which never fails to impress the lower deck, it rarely fails to antagonize his social equals. This is what would only be described in a less cultured person as a tendency towards personal display.

This trait takes the form of a keen delight in new uniforms—gaudied with as many rows of medal-ribbons as possible, in special distinguishing devices for his motor-cars, and in outsize white naval cap-covers—all externals calculated to draw attention to himself. This exaggerated show in a man both handsome and highly placed seems to his equals to be a distasteful form of boasting. They failed to appreciate it as the natural result of his royal birth and somewhat flamboyant disposition. Among royal families it is quite usual to find this extreme preoccupation with medals, awards, decorations, orders of precedence, and salutes—which is paradoxical, for, as a general rule, people born to unassailable positions are less inclined to pay attention to such matters than those less fortunate. In fact, the aristocracy of most countries accepts its privileges and perquisites so unquestionably that it seldom appears to be aware of them. The royal families of Europe, however, are not really an aristocracy. They are not founded on great landed estates with feudal traditions. They are, rather, people in very high positions, trained intensively in the special social arts of tact and charm, but with few specific responsibilities. Moreover, as Mountbatten himself is fond of saying, the international royal group is rather like a trade union. One is either a member or, if one marries morganatically, a black-leg. Within this closed circle, so easy to slip out of and equally impossible to enter, cousins vie with each other in personal display and petty grandeur—largely because they have

nothing better to do, but also because of the ceremonial nature of the royal career.

Strangely enough, his own self-confidence depends largely upon his feeling that he has the absolute devotion of his officers and men. It is quite understandable, however, that a man who has been brought up to believe that his duty as a born leader was to the men he commanded would need to feel that he had the absolute trust of those men. For example, his Deputy Chief of Staff in South-East Asia was frequently disturbed by the disloyalties to Mountbatten which were current at his headquarters, and would, when he thought it was in the interests of the command to do so, tell Mountbatten about them. To this Mountbatten would reply "Preposterous!" and that his staff were working behind him as a perfect team. On one occasion, after having been given a circumstantial account of the disloyalty of a subordinate, he looked up wearily and said, "But don't you realize I *must* believe my officers are a hundred per cent. behind me, or I would not have the strength to go on!"

Despite this heavy reliance upon the support and co-operation of his officers, self-confidence is not a thing in which Mountbatten is lacking. Accordingly, if he makes up his mind as to a certain course of action, he will not hesitate to sacrifice his career, his friends, or anyone else in its achievement. He does not make up his mind hastily in important matters, nor leap to decisions—he arrives at them. He is as much a plodder (to use his own word) in the making of decisions as he is in mastering the science of radio or the game of polo. Although he will make a decision on detail without reflection, he will never take a step affecting policy without having first mastered all the available evidence and asked the opinions of as many divergent people as he can. He will, in other words, present in turn the facts as he has learned them to a private soldier, a general, a person sitting next to him at dinner, a casual acquaintance, or an old friend. He will ask each one what he thinks is the solution to the problem, and then he will make up his own mind, independent of the advice he has received.

This is done on the basis of all sorts of formulas and methods. For example, in South-East Asia he evolved a set of rules for reaching decision as Supreme Allied Commander very much as he developed a set of rules for himself in learning how to play polo.

In his speech at the dinner given in his honour by the Government of New Zealand in April 1946 Mountbatten for the first time publicly stated the rule on which he worked when making decisions of far-reaching consequence. His speech was roughly as follows:

"No one will dispute that, the higher the level at which decisions have to be reached, the further ahead must the officer making the

decisions look. No one, however, has laid down any form of rule, and, in order to arrive at the correct distance in each case for myself, I have endeavoured to fill in a scale on the following lines: A company commander, acting independently, has probably to look at least one day ahead and say to himself, 'What will the situation of my company be twenty-four hours from now, if I adopt the following course?' A battalion commander, acting independently, has to look at least two or three days ahead, and try to visualize the position of his battalion in relation to his brigade three days after adopting a particular course. In the same way the brigadier of an independent brigade must project himself, say, a week or ten days forward in thought before making a decision. A divisional commander will need to think at least three or four weeks ahead. A corps commander will require a forward interval of six to eight weeks. An army commander must look forward three or four months, and the Army Group Commander-in-Chief six or seven months.

"I came to the conclusion that the Supreme Commander must look some ten or twelve months ahead, and it became my habit to project myself forward one year when reaching military decisions during the war, to consider what the effect of a decision would be in a year's time. Experience proved this rule to be about right. For example, a decision arrived at to employ certain resources in Burma would mean that they would not be available for the invasion of Malaya. On the other hand, if Burma were cleared more quickly, the invasion of Malaya might be speeded up as a result of the decision.

"But the most important rule which I discovered for myself was that, when making decisions affecting the Military Administration of civil population, in view of repercussions such decisions would have when civil government returned, it was necessary to project oneself forward no less than ten years.

"When I made any important decision about Burma, Malaya, or even when dealing with foreign countries in South-East Asia, such as French Indo-China, I tried to imagine that I was in the year 1955, sitting in front of the fire, reading an unbiased history of the present situation in South-East Asia. I tried to imagine it would be reported in such a book, and I would then re-read my draft directive, or draft proclamation, or draft telegram, to the Chiefs of Staff, as though I were reading it in this history book. I would then try to imagine the comments of the historian on the consequences of this draft. You would be surprised how often I felt disposed to amend it, or alter the decision, when I had isolated my mind from the heat and worries by which I was surrounded in meeting day-to-day problems, and when I looked at the position in this dispassionate way."

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It is not enough to have a system which one can reconcile with broader and more fundamental issues. Although a belief in oneself and the job one is doing is essential, it is also necessary to have a faith in something greater and more abstract. In a less materialistic age, I would have said that one must have a religion. In the case of Mountbatten, his fundamental belief is in the importance of the individual and, therefore, he nurtures a vehement hatred for any person or system which tends to suppress individuality.

I have mentioned before that when Mountbatten was appointed last Viceroy he was accused not only of being a liberal but also of being a "red". When I first heard this same accusation made in South-East Asia I jumped to the conclusion that Mountbatten had probably heeded the lesson of the opportunist which teaches that there are more poor than rich, and therefore your chances of winning are greater if you are, in this era of numerical tyranny, on the larger side. It was not long, however, before I discovered that, in my cynicism, I had misjudged my man.

In South-East Asia Mountbatten for the first time had the opportunity to put his liberalism into practice. Those of his staff who held to the conservative and imperial tradition interpreted their commander's policy merely as a new manifestation of his opportunism. Liberalism, they argued, could not be the natural attribute of princes. A liberal prince, however, is no more of a paradox than a conservative ditch-digger. In fact, he is less of one, for it is logical to assume that if one is educated to a strong sense of duty one should also be educated to a strong sense of loyalty. Naturally a prince would be taught loyalty to his followers rather than to a set of traditions. The sovereign rights of the individual under Mountbatten's command were as much a matter for his concern as were the rights of vassals who had sworn the oath of fealty to his ancestors.

Previously, when he was not in a sufficiently important position to be accused of political opportunism, Mountbatten made something of a nuisance of himself by stating publicly that Dictator Mussolini should be fatally crushed before he got beyond control. His brother officers declared this to be impossible on the grounds that there was not enough available ammunition in the Mediterranean to do so. "If there's not enough ammunition," Mountbatten would reply, "then let's go in and do it with our fists!"

Later, when the Spanish Civil War was at its height, he passionately advocated sending the British Navy into the ports of Spain and blowing the Franco fascists off the face of the earth. "If a dictatorship is established in Spain," he prophesied, "a fuse will be lighted which will eventually ignite the powder-keg of total war." During this same period he strongly expressed his violent hatred of the Hitler regime on all occasions, appro-

priate and inappropriate. Mountbatten, in advocating this course in Germany and Spain, was going against the interests of his own family. In Spain the Nationalists had deposed his aunt, Queen Ena; and in Germany the Hitler regime was more apt than any other to support the pretensions of his landed relatives.

In a sense, Mountbatten's liberalism is much the same as that of Thomas Jefferson. He could well say with that great American, "I was never the sort of man to submit the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any party of men whatever, in religion, in philosophy or politics, or in anything else where I was capable of thinking for myself." And Mountbatten believes that no other man should be forced to do so.

But his greatest characteristic is neither his sense of duty nor his protective liberalism. It is, rather, his remarkable imagination. This characteristic gives him the double advantage of being able to see things as he would like them to be, and of being able to put himself in the position of others, and thereby understanding their point of view. This faculty of being able to see things as one would wish them to be is frequently found in great leaders. Its possessor has the advantage of not being able to envisage defeat (so often the downfall of commanders), because he is incapable of accepting any facts which are counter to his hopes. For instance, during the war Winston Churchill would frequently be told that there was not enough material on hand to effect the plan in which he was interested. He refused to accept the evidence. Mountbatten has an imagination of very much the same type.

His first destroyer command, a channel-marker in every naval officer's career, and a source of great pride and satisfaction, had been on H.M.S. *Daring*. When he and his officers had to transfer to the *Wishart*, an inferior ship by comparison, he was, naturally enough, very unhappy. A week after the exchange, however, Mountbatten was again filled with pride and enthusiasm, this time for his new ship, and had managed to find many things about the old hulk in which it far excelled the *Daring*. In the early stages of the war he was absolutely convinced of the immortality of the *Kelly* during the many dangerous situations through which she passed. In Combined Operations he was equally convinced of the tremendous importance and sure success of each of the raiding operations. Later, in South-East Asia, he managed to dispel the sense of futility which overwhelmed his staff each time operations were curtailed, by his infectious and sincere enthusiasm over the substituted plan.

The other great advantage which his powers of imagination have given him is the ability to put himself in the position of others. He instinctively knows what to say to an audience because he can imagine himself in their place. When one first meets Mountbatten, one is impressed by the fact that while talking to you he sees a situation from your, rather

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than his, point of view. This is no sense an "act". In talking to somebody he actually does, for an instant, become the person he is addressing. For example, on one occasion when he was inspecting a battleship he stopped and asked a gunner some question about the gun turret. A moment later his imagination had projected him into the gunner's position. Question followed question as he became more and more absorbed in his new character until, finally, he was politely reminded by one of his aides that the inspection had to be completed. This is by no means an isolated experience. Moreover, this ability to see things through the eyes of others does not depend upon them being present. In discussing a course of action he is contemplating, he can tell you with surprising insight the divergent reactions of a London editor, a Siamese politician, a Tory minister, a Socialist back-bencher, or a Japanese general. It is this talent which accounts, in part, for Mountbatten's great skill as a mediator. A man is in a better position to solve a disagreement if he is capable of appreciating conflicting points of view causing the dissention. During the war a great deal of Mountbatten's high-level experience was devoted to harmonizing widely differing groups. It is only necessary to remember what he accomplished as mediator to realize how successful he was. In Combined Operations his greatest task was to co-ordinate the three fighting Services and to get them to co-operate on a tactical level. As Supreme Allied Commander his job was to integrate the Americans, British, Indians, and Chinese into one fighting force, attacking a common enemy. After the Japanese surrender he had the immense task of reconciling the civil administrators of Britain, France and the Netherlands to the changed status of European colonial interest in the East.

In the position of Governor-General, which he has just relinquished, he has had very much the same type of job, namely the complex and seemingly impossible task of creating accord within discord, of leaving India respecting Britain rather than hating her and of trying to make the new Dominion a self-governing democracy. Mountbatten left India strong, democratic and secure. He has shown that the British Empire can still produce leaders of the stature of Clive and Raffles, of Palmerston and Pitt.

As Governor-General, Mountbatten grasped the opportunity of creative statesmanship on a very high level. A political retreat that leaves India a responsible and productive element in world economy and frees the enormous moral and spiritual potential of Hinduism without undermining the dignity and manhood of Moslems, is in itself an achievement greater than mere Empire building.

The position of reconciliation is a vital need of world society. In India Mountbatten showed how far the British Empire had mastered the old lesson of history—that one honest friend is far better than any

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number of willing servants and that, as the record of English-American relationship proves to the discomfort of all tyrants, Britain is most powerful when she is not an Empire but a friend and equal.

Mountbatten's high achievement as the last Viceroy and as the first Governor-General of the new Dominion is, perhaps, best summed up in the words of one who has become one of his greatest friends—Pandit Nehru. The Indian Prime Minister had this to say of Lord Mountbatten on the eve of his departure for Britain: Earl Mountbatten, Pandit Nehru said, had acted in India's interests as zealously as any Indian could have done. Lord Mountbatten had held India's honour high. When he left Indians would feel the same regret as when a brother went.

THE END





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